Mummer Mystic Plays

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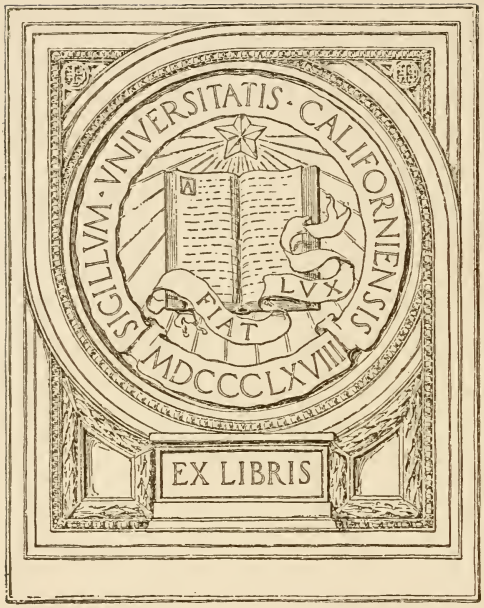
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MUMMER MYSTIC PLAYS

Mummer Mystic Plays

I. Cobwebs

II. What's gone of Menie?

(a study in vulgarity.)

BY

ALASTOR GRAEME

(Mrs. Frederick Townshend Marryat)

AUTHOR OF

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COBWEBS

COBWEBS

An Extravaganza (in twelve Silhouettes.)

SILHOUETTE I

"IN QUAD"

The ruddy old Kentish Hall, very ancient indeed, and a good deal the worse for wear, shone red in the sunshine, as did the red brick terraces beyond; as seen through an arch of ivied cloister, with a great clump of evergreens to one side. The sunshine, somewhat low, streamed through the ivy arch, and lighted up mossed and antique Quadrangle, with a Fountain playing in the centre. The whole "Quad" was ringing just then, to the sound of a rich resonant voice, as clear-toned as a silver bell. A girl sat in a rocking-chair, rocking to and fro, and singing to a baby-child, and there was ever the refrain of softly-plashing waters.

"There was an old woman
Went up in a basket,
Ninety times as high as the moon.
Where she was going, I couldn't help asking,
For in her hands, she carried a broom.

" Old woman; old woman, old woman,"
Said I,
" Where are you going with your broom
So high?
" I'm going to sweep cobwebs
Off of the sky;
And I'll come back to you,
By and bye.

Plash of the falling Fountain.

Words, simple and foolish enough, but rendered significent, beautiful, even pathetic, by timbre of voice, and charm of style.

" O Mammy. Sing it agen?"

Mammy did.

Meantime, half behind the rocking singer, a shadow intercepted the sunlight. A young fellow stood leaning under the arch, and listening. He was booted and spurred, riding-whip in hand.

" O Mammy. Sing it agen?" he echoed, in quaint imitation of the child's voice.

The girl started, and turned. She was very blonde, so blonde indeed, that her deepest blush, which then suddenly suffused her whole face and neck, was only rose-pink.

" O Mr Arden, where did you start from? What a shame."

" What is a shame? That I should listen to that dear sweet old song? I am a child again, and my old nurse is rocking me, and singing to me. Only I fancy you hadn't got the words quite the same. Mrs. Fitz-Alan, you have transformed me into such a dear good little boy."

And he sat down by the fountain at her feet.

"A little boy who craves nothing sweeter nor stronger than toffy and tops—such a good, sweet, moral 'ittle boy. You might rock me, like Tottie, with impunity; and I should go to seep."

"I'd be sorry to try you," she laughed. "You'd be a wee bit heavier than Tottie, I fancy."

Her blush had slowly subsided, leaving her somewhat paler than before.

The blonde baby-girl, lying on her mother's breast, continued to stare defiance at the intruder. She resented his coming.

"But how is it that you are here instead of at Burrels?"

"I am here, because you are here," he said boldly. "I am not at the Burrels because you are not at the Burrels."

The ever-ready blush sprang again.

"What nonsense you talk."

"I can't help that. But how is it that you are here, instead of there?"

The lint-white lashes drooped over the deep-blue eyes.

"Cress forbid me to go. He has gone to Town."

"In fact," laughed Guy Arden, "you are in Quad."

"Yes, I am in Quad," she answered, playing with the frill of the baby's bib.

"I am afraid you must have been a very, very naughty little girl. The pious little boy, I think, can't do better than preach the naughty little girl a sermon. He'll never have a better chance. A naughty little girl has a husband who is an uncom-

monly good fellow in his way; but unfortunately is heavily handicapped, for the "evil Genii" have bestowed on him three "blessings," which are—Cusses; mature age; a jealous temperament; and a young and lovely wife, who flirts involuntarily."

"How stupid you are. What nonsense you talk."

He raised his hand for silence.

"Now the advice of the pious little boy to the naughty little girl is, never, never, do it again. Be cautious, be demure, be watchful, shelter under the rose. For brick walls have eyes and ears. Do you follow?"

She laughed at him.

"At the present moment," he went on, playing with his whip, eyes down, "your sister-in-law Augusta, is knitting hard, and looking out of a window; very little knitting, and very much looking. Now I wouldn't mind a bit your husband thinking you a universal flirt, there's no harm done, but I wouldn't like him to imagine for a moment that the naughty little girl and the pious little boy could ever flirt together. That would be death."

"How absurd you are. And how you exaggerate."

"Not at all. Were we supposed to do anything so naughty, it would mean for me—exile And what is exile, but death?"

The blue eyes fell before the black. She played with the baby's bib, for there was no more laughter in his eyes; and she was a bit scared and startled at their intensity.

Those two had met a dozen times, at garden parties and elsewhere; but now-a-days acquaintance

ripens rapidly into Platonic love.

" You can't care so very much for Rathmore as all that," she said coquettishly. " You and Cress have nothing in common. Augusta is too old to amuse you. And you and I are almost—strangers."

" You and I are almost strangers," he echoed. " Yet," he added emphatically, " had you an unmarried sister, the fac-simile of yourself, in form, features and all, I'd marry her to-morrow, or die in the attempt."

Jenno Fitz-Alan, generally called " Joan," started impulsively, and was about to speak. Then she stopped dead, fell for a few moments into rapid thought, then finally broke into peal on peal of laughter, which rang through the Court-yard, and awaked the sleeping child, who resumed her scrutiny of the stranger. He watched Joan, somewhat huffily.

" Well, have you a sister?"

" O, stacks of them," laughed Joan, " and brothers too. But they are not like me, and flirt worse than I do."

" Then I must pule and pine in vain," he answered tragically. " Now you understand. Don't send me into exile. For if you treat me as you treat other men, there'll be a conflagration."

" How do I treat other men? And how am I to treat you, pious little boy?"

" He's not a 'ittle boy, he's a gate big naughty man," said Dottie.

They both laughed.

" O, these terrible children," said Arden.

"Be quiet, Dottie, and go to sleep."

"Me don't like *you*," said Dottie.

"Naughty 'ittle girl," he continued to Joan.

"She's not a naughty 'ittle girl, cos she's my Mammy."

Joan burst into renewed laughter.

O, I say, said Arden aside, "this is terrible. Out of the mouth of this babe and suckling comes a home-thrust at every word. You treat other men," he said to Joan, "as if they were blocks of wood or stone, and you were a baby; you play with them as if they were skittles or bowls. You set them up, and then, making a clean sweep, dash them down promiscuously. You throw them about like toys. I come back to find all my friends and pals helpless, imbecile, and disabled. Not one is sane, nor sound. Naughty little girl, you must treat me as if I were a real live man. Don't then, raise those blue eyes too near to mine; don't glance up, nor glance down; don't have a thousand whims a moment, and play them all on me; don't toss hair in the sunshine, till it's all a dazzle of silk-worm web; don't let two blue stars, and one little full-blown rose peep through, or, by Heavens, the pi——

[Enter Augusta Fitz-Alan, S.P.R.]; a nimble spinster, with a rakish eye—an eye which had raked for five and forty years. O, Augusta Fitz-Alan had sowed wild oats in her day! You could see it in the twitch of her lip, in the turn of her eye; nor, had she been seethed in her own young affections. She was a coquette at sixty.

"Don't let me disturb you", she said, sitting down,

with a naughty twinkle in her eye. "In Cress' absence, you have come to take care of Joan?"

"Augusta, what can I do better? Idlesse means mischief."

"So I think; and then there's Satan. My dear Joan," she added, turning vivaciously to her young sister-in-law, "I've known the boy ever since he was that high," holding her diamonded hand a foot above the ground;" and he was—I only make an exception in favour of his brother Black—the wildest, wickedest, most unmanageable boy, I ever had to do with. I used to help tub him and soap him."

"Surely I must have made for you, Augusta? I mean, for a kiss?"

"No, there was no kissing about you at that stage," laughed Augusta. "You used to kick and bite. Vicious? I should think you were vicious. And, for all his demure looks, Joan, he's just as bad now. I've known him off and on through boyhood, youth, and manhood; and he's as wild as they make them. Whatever you do, *don't trust Guy Arden*," (Aside) "O—I could tell you tales, my dear, about those Ardens."

And Augusta opened her big eyes aslant, and bit her lip, with a grotesque grimace which had in it a world of expression, and gave her knowing head a succession of little jerks. Arden laughed.

"Perhaps I could turn the tables on those Fitz-Alans."

"I thought as much," laughed Joan. "Even Dottie says he's a "gate big naughty man." And you know Dottie's precocious instincts. I'd swear by them."

"And now I suppose you'll put up your horse, and take care of two poor lonely women?" said Augusta, with a terrible suspicion of a wink beneath her smile.

"O Augusta, may I?"

"My dear boy, I am not mistress of Rathmore. Ask Joan."

But Joan was blushing rose-pink; O, those faint, yet sweet and sudden blushes, they amused Augusta vastly; but were playing the mischief with Guy Arden's heart. To watch the pair of them, was to the world-hardened "Gus," as good as a Play.

So Guy Arden stopped. He stayed to dinner, and stayed the night. They sat out in the moon-washed "Quad," amid the moon-washed roses; and all looked quiet and trite enough.

Yet a little naked boy played the maddest pranks around, an ill-regulated little boy, and unruly. 'Twas all heredity. His mother having been an incorrigible coquette; and his father, not the best of characters. He had been badly brought up. But isn't there something in Nature?

SILHOUETTE II

"A thundering ring-fence
Deer-park Lie."

A DRAWN BATTLE.

Augusta Fitz-Alan, in a jaunty little toque, spotted veil, and jetted high-shouldered capelet, drove her spirited ponies at a rattling pace through the Park, at Braybrooke—home of the Ardens. Scene, in her young days, of many an intrigue and adventure. For "Braybrooke" had always been a Bohemian household, from time immemorial.

Guy Arden's father and Crescy Fitz-Alan, had been wild young blades together. Be sure the house had not lost its reputation in the hands of the younger generation.

"I believe she's there," said Augusta aloud, quite regardless of the cockaded groom behind her; as she spun round in style, to the grand entrance portico.

The bell pealed through the hall.

After some slight hesitation on the part of the stately satellite—"Ye-es Madam—Mr. Arden was at home."

And Augusta jumped nimbly down, and shook out her bells kirts. Guy Arden himself, came through the hall to meet her.

"Augusta? Great powers—to what happy circumstance am I indebted, for this unwonted pleasure?"

Augusta dropped her voice.

"Is Joan here?"

"Joan? Mrs. Fitz-Alan? Haven't set eyes on her, since I left Rathmore two days ago."

The solemn footman listened open-mouthed, and winked at the impassable butler.

"Have you lost her? Come and have some tea; or, better still, a whisky and soda."

"I won't say nay. The heat is intense. How do, Jemmy? Have you seen Mrs. Fitz-Alan to day?"

"I've not seen Mrs. Fitz-Alan since the day of the Tournament, I'm pining for a sight of her."

"Well, that you may get any day of the week, I should think" said Augusta with a laugh. "She's never at home. Cress has just returned from town, in an excessively captious humour, let me tell you; and furious at not finding Joan at home to meet him. Should you meet her, Guy," she added significantly, "have the goodness to send her home immediately."

"I Will," said Guy, with corresponding gravity, "is it any good for me to go to the Lightfoots, and see if she's there?"

"Ah do, there's a dear boy," laughed Augusta. "It may prevent a scene to-night. But Eleanor Lightfoot is always on the "fantastic toe." If she and Joan are out together, be sure they're up to mischief."

Jemmy Jessamy got up suddenly, and looked out

of the window. Augusta was drawing on her gauntlets. And, with much laughter and chaff, the two young men escorted her to her carriage. Simultaneously, appeared two figures from an inner room, in riding gear, and kissed their hands to Gussie's retreating figure. The two girls, Joan Fitz-Alan, and Eleanor Lightfoot, the wife of a neighbouring squire were in fits of laughter.

"What a big bare-faced lie," cried Eleanor, to Guy Arden, laughing, "how could you?"

Eleanor Lightfoot had been unmistakeably born and "raised" in India; she was the daughter of an Indian Judge. She had a tall, finely-developed figure, sallow complexion, long, narrow, black eyes, and fuzzy black hair; when she laughed—which was always—she displayed dazzling teeth, and her round cheeks were one big dimple. She radiated with mirth and mischief. Eleanor was indeed a foil to the lily-white Joan, her inseparable chum. There was a husband, somewhere behind the scenes, but he never appeared.

The two girls had ridden over, by invitation, to Braybrooke, escorted by Jemmy Jessamy. They all subsided on couches and easy-chairs, and the room resounded with laughter. For, on Augusta's appearance, they had all four been engaged in the game of "cock-fighting"; and Joan had just been rolled over on her back, with her little high heels in the air—amid shrieks of laughter from Eleanor Lightfoot. Joan's lint-white hair was streaming down her back. It was not the Joan "in Quad." It was a wild, daring, audacious, little Joan, who reclined in aban-

donment of grace, on a couch ; and looked up at Guy Arden, with a blue challenge, through a golden web ; but they were not alone, and she knew it.

" I must be off, or Cress will give me fits. "

He sat down close beside her.

" Yes ? Shall I come and protect you " he asked, in a voice that was a caress. " Will he scare you very much ? I hear he spoils you terribly. Tell me," he asked abruptly, " how did you come to marry Colonel Fitz-Alan ? You don't love him ? "

" How do you know that ? And by what right do you say so ? I love him more than a little bit, and certainly better than I did. He is a dear, when he isn't angry. But shall I tell you all about it " she asked, smiling up at him. " You know my father and mother are in India. And "—

She stopped suddenly ; then pushed her hair out of her eyes, and began to shake with laughter.

" O, do forgive me. "

After a desperate effort, she got serious.

" You'll think me very funny, Mr. Arden ; but I can't help laughing at it all. Well, I was sent home to England quite as a baby "—

" And why weren't the brothers and sisters sent home too ? "

" I don't know," laughed Joan. " They liked me best ; they thought I was " delicate." So I came all by my little self ; and was taken to Aunt Lucinda, to Paris—that is mother's sister. When I grew up, I had a " real good time." She took us—me—everywhere. O, I loved Aunt Lucindy dearly. She was so pretty, and a little young widow."

"I'd like to have known Aunt Lucindy," murmured Arden.

"Indeed you would have loved her. Everybody did. At least all the men. One fine day we—I was seventeen then—Colonel Fitz-Alan came to see us. He had been the Colonel of Father's regiment, in India, and awfully fond of father and mother too. And, will you believe it?—instead of paying court to Aunt Lucindy, he paid court to me. She was rich too. I hadn't a penny. Aunt Lucindy said it would be a great match, and he had a fine old place in Kent, and was a big-wig. O, she was pleased. On the second day he came, Crescy asked me to be his wife; but I said I really didn't know. Then he cabled to Bombay; and father cabled back; and Aunt Lucindy cabled, and mother cabled. It was all cable."

"And the answer?"

"'By all means.' So, in a week Cress and I were married straight away."

"And then?"

Joan blushed vividly.

"O, then we travelled everywhere. I didn't like it very much. He loved me too much. But I got used to him. We get on capitally now."

'O, child, child." Guy Arden, his head bent low, tore at his cropped head in mockery of despair, "why didn't some merciful Fate—Providence—call it what you will, lead me to Paris, before Cress Fitz-Alan, to Aunt Lucinda's door, to cable to Bombay, and to marry you "straight away?"

"Perhaps they'd have said No" laughed Joan

"I think not," he added lightly and significantly, yet bitterly too. "I think a rent-roll of £20,000 a year would have bought the little white slave. He was the first bidder. But I, I could have outbid, and bought you, and carried you off. Anyway, I'd have run away with you. You were *sold*."

The tone of the words startled Joan. She stared hard at him, with a kind of pouting defiance, like an enquiring child.

"My father and mother are everything sweet and dear and noble," said she.

Guy Arden kept his own thoughts.

"Joan, will you do up your own hair? or let Mr. Arden do it?" cried Eleanor, coming up. "You'll catch it, my dear."

Mr. Arden did do it. He twisted it deftly in a big soft knot, and fastened it in classic fashion, just at the nape of the neck, for he was an "artist."

In another five minutes, they were all riding at a stretching gallop across country, taking everything in their flight.

In the meantime Crescy Fitz-Alan, a tall gaunt man of fifty or thereabouts, strode impatiently up and down the hall, his hands in his pockets; sometimes looking moodily from the windows; sometimes, eyes cast down, absorbed in his own thoughts, which were far away from thence. He had a long, sallow face, coal-black hair; his features were high and aquiline, strongly marked, and lined, and wasted—not by time—but by unbridled passion and dissipation. He was very like Augusta, but, she had sipped kindly of the Circean cup, and thriven on it. He

had drained it to the dregs. His hand, as he poured out and raised the frequent draught to his lips, shook like the aspen.

By the time Joan Fitz-Alan reached Rathmore, and sped through the courtyard she was splashed from head to foot; a long Bacchante lock streamed behind her; and the chaff and excitement of the wild gallop, had got into her veins. She was panting slightly, with her run, and trying hard not to laugh in his face. He was scowling, but—mercifully for Joan—had spent most of his wrath on "old Gus."

"What in the name of all that's—blue, have you been up to, Joan? You look as if you'd been dragged through a furze bush."

"I've been galloping with Nell Lightfoot."

"Galloping? I should think you have. But Nell Lightfoot accounts for all. I by no means approve of so much of that young woman's society for you Joan, she'd lead you to the devil."

"How can you say such things. She is a dear, sweet darling, as good a girl as ever lived," cried Joan hotly.

"Only, that she forgets she has got a husband. And he is fool enough to forget he has a wife. I don't. Next time, you ride with your groom, if you please. And I shall know where you go, and what you do. I can't trust you."

"Cress, how dare you say such a thing? Did I ever tell you a lie?"

"Where have you been to day?"

Joan hesitated a moment.

"To the Lightfoots; then Nell and I, and Mr.

Jessamy rode over to Braybrooke, to tea. That's all."

"And a very charming programme too; and a very pretty quartette. Playing at leap-frog, no doubt—if not something worse. Playing the fool all round."

He little guessed how near he was to the truth; and Joan, "getting warmer" as in magic music, as he neared it, blushed all over her pretty little ears.

"No, My charming Joan; you ride with Evans, or not at all."

"Then I'll not ride at all. I might as well be chained like a dog, or hobbled like a horse."

Joan was tossing up bits of paper into the air and and switching them in two with her riding.whip as, they fell. He snatched the whip away from her. Joan sat on the table, and swung her legs.

"And you'll not drive, unless with Gus. And you'll not walk, unless with Gus, outside this place. You need a chaperone. None more so."

"May the Devil fly away with you?" cried Joan.

"Moderate your language if you please."

"I won't!" (then, with extraordinary rapidity) "Devil-Devil-Devil-Damn-Damn-Damn and I *will* say damn—So there?"

He laughed, which enraged her more.

"And I'll not drive and I'll not walk," cried Joan passionately. "You may put bars to the windows, and turn the key on me, if you like. It just means that. What's the good of being truthful and straightforward? From this day forth, I'll *lie, lie,*

lie. I'll go crooked. I'll go zig-zig crooked, like lightning, all over the country, so that you cant catch me," (zig-zagging her finger through the air) "I'll lead you a pretty dance."

And Joan pendulumed her little feet, with extraordinary rapidity. Joan, sweet though she looked, was certainly quick-silver; her head showed quite pink with passion, through her dishevelled lint-white locks.

"Then my pretty Joan, you shall have, your bars."

Having got a rise, he was smiling grimly and amusedly down on her.

"Come Joan," he said, and what bitter words would have come, he stopped with kisses. Whilst Joan, putting up her two hands, her eyes sparkling with passion, vigorously pulled his hair, and then soundly boxed his ears.

"I feel better now," she said.

It was easy to be seen, that this man, with his ungovernable tempers and passions, of whom most people were afraid, was just Joan's slave, yet he was of that temperament, that he was jealous of even the sun that kissed, the wind that wooed her. He hated a man even to glance at his wife, yet he was terribly careless and indulgent. He would have had his little Joan go about veiled, with an eye looking out of a hole in it. But even then, her innocent blue eyes had such an audacious glint in them.

"Come, a truce, a truce," said he, "till the next time?"

"Fancy spooning at this time of day," said Joan, with supreme contempt.

" Well, be sweet to me Joan, and I'll promise anything ? "

" You will ? "

" I swear. "

" Then Cress, darling old Cress, besides yourself —there are only two people I care for, in all this big County, Nell Lightfoot and Guy Arden. I want them both to play with. They are quite harmless, really. "

" Well, I give you Nell, in moderation. But Arden "—

He burst out laughing at the thought.

" Heaven forbid that you should play with an Arden. No, I draw the line there. "

" O well, I'd rather play with Nell any day, " pouted Joan.

" Play with your live doll," said he.

SILHOUETTE III

TROIS TEMPS AND DEUX TEMPS.—JEAN.

A flood of mellow eletric light, giving an occasional flutter like a butterfly's wing, when it sits on a honeyed flower. One of those dreams of Strauss, blended of pathos and passion, low on the lull, high, swelling, to the cry of impassioned pleading. Then, low and dreamful, to the soft measure and beat of dancing feet.

" The musicians kept their eyes upon those two dancers, and their music became inspired ; Eleanor Lightfoot and Guy Arden.

Eleanor, tall, and somewhat redundant, yet danced like a dream. 'Twas the very poetry of motion. That slow sway, and rhythmical swing—and her partner was worthy of her. They were far and away the best dancers in the room. Dancing was a passion with Nell Lightfoot ; and the music coursed through her veins like fire. They danced so softly and so slowly. Their movements were so languorous, gliding, and harmonious. They looked as if they were going to die, or to sleep, or to swoon, in each other's arms. Only, that every now and again, the light caught her black eyes, and they flashed like the brilliants on her black floating gown.

They had danced every dance together. For "Nell" (an Indian girl) was pretty reckless and unconventional.

After the dance, they passed into the conservatory.

"Sit out this square with me?" said Arden.

"Yes, one moment"—

She was speaking aside to Dash of the fifteenth Lancers, who had followed her. They stood together in the shadows. Then an opening door gave forth light and music; and Arden, who was sitting in a dream, vaguely heard—

"If I throw it before the bell-clock strikes one, I will meet you. If I throw it after, I wont." And—

"I will be there."

In another moment, Eleanor Lightfoot's regal figure was silhouetted against the light. To see into the gloom, she held her great feather fan, which sparkled with jewels, aloft, and smiled below it. Then she trailed softly in, and sank on to the couch beside him.

"Are you aware?" she laughed, "that I have been monopolizing you for every single dance? And am hated in proportion? Murderous looks from mothers and daughters, greet me whichever way I turn. I am quite scared. How the girls do hate me."

"I am not surprised."

"And all the time; you dance with me, because we talk Joan; and because I am Joan's shadow. If you cannot have the substance, you take the shadow."

"I didn't feel much like dancing with a shadow far from it."

"You make insinuations on my stoutness."

" I infer everything that I should like to say, and dare not. Perfect grace, symmetry, perfection of form and motion, you may stipple in the rest, I dare not. I have been floating in a dream, between Earth and Heaven, as did the doomed lover of Francesca-da-Rimmini. You know his fate? "

Eleanor Lightfoot raised her fan to her face.

" Pray don't mention anything so improper to me, Mr. Arden. "

" But though I may gaze with envious eyes on some beautiful statue, that is placed on a pedestal high above me, and admire it at my lesiure, I don't find it so easy to study and analyse the inner works."

" You should turn on the Röutzen rays."

" There are some characters which are constantly shifting, or drifting — in kaleidoscopic colour and change ; and which seem to take the tone and colour of every changing chance and scene. Sometimes such a character may be a wild hoyden ; sometimes —I could almost fancy—a reckless women ; sometimes a saint, sometimes an unfledged sinner."

" A little of all ? " laughed Eleanor. " Are we not all made like that ? From personal experience, I think that the most part of womenkind, I vouch for myself, are like Louis XI. of France. They fluctuate between fits of delirium, and fits of piety. They take both very badly. We are very naughty in thought and word, if not in deed ; and then we hang the leaden dolly's round our hats, and go and 'fess ; and then we begin all over again ; naughty and pi— naughty and pi," and suiting action to word, she waved her fan to and fro expressively.

"I wish you'd 'fess to me?" said Arden, toying with a spangle on her skirt. "It would be a revelation."

"So would all Anglo-Indian life. Of which though, you know as much as I can tell you. We used to be in little tents, in too-too Twos"—

She leaned forward, smiling vividly, and flashed her eyes into his; her fragrant filmy skirts brushed him. There was a pomegranate flower behind her ear, and another on her shoulder. They burned like flame. Her soft white face, with her black eyes and dazzling teeth, was all one dimple.

"And—?" said Arden.

She swept her feather-fan across his bending face, and softly laughed.

"And—do you think I'se goin' to 'fess?" she asked coquettishly. "Not a bit of it. Women of the World, dear boy, never 'fess to the Laity.

We only turn our little toeses,
From the naughty path of roses,
And say—we are not going that way.

Her charming Espieglerie was inimitable. He laughed as he looked at her; and his heart beat ever faster, as he held her bare hand within his own.

She started, and quickly withdrew it.

"Let's talk Joan?"

"And why not Eleanor?"

"O, because "Eleanor" is done with, and done for. Eleanor was taken away from the man she loved, and married to the man she didn't. What does it matter? If she couldn't have *the* one—one was as good as another. That's my hackneyed little

history. Now Joan, loves her husband after a fashion. And he idolizes her. They are happy together. She is an "old man's darling." But don't you believe Colonel Fitz isn't a man to fascinate women,I remember him in India, when I was a child, riding at the head of his troop—he was on the staff. O' he was splendid. All the women were in love with him; my mother amongst the rest. Now, he's a wreck. Ten years make just the the difference in such a life as his. But I expect he's very wiry, and will live to ninety. So don't count on Joan as a widow. But it's a horrid shame he won't let her dance."

"She does though, whenever she gets a chance. I danced with her all night at Shroton—an impromptu."

Eleanor laughed.

"What a naughty little thing. I don't wonder that he is jealous, really. She is so exquisitely pretty."

"Yes, I know I should be. I should shut her up in a glass case, if I had the care of her."

"You'd never keep her there," laughed Eleanor. "But do you know—or don't you know," she asked, with a sudden change of manner, "that Joan is fast, and Joan is fair, but Joan's an angel darling? Darling little Joan is as innocent as a baby, and as pure as a saint. I don't know how she's kept so. I shall not have Joan to my house any more. You always meet her there."

He was playing with her glove, his head down.

"Eleanor, don't be so cruel. I count the hours between your 'days.'"

"I know you do. You have got Joan on the brain. Guy, I never knew you as bad as this before. No, don't speak, don't deny, I know and see it all. You are in desperate earnest, but she"—

He looked up from under his eyebrows, keen and intent.

"She only likes you as yet, just a little *wee* bit more than other men. She blushes for you, and for no other man. *Voilà tout.* Guy, don't make her care for you any more than she does, promise me?"

"I'll make no rash promises. But I am not vain enough to imagine I could make her care for me, more than for others. Why should she?"

"Why does anybody care for anybody?" asked Eleanor lightly; and, gazing wistfully into the eyes which had grown so suddenly haggard, she passed her hand, as swiftly and flutteringly as the wing of a bird, over his. "Though I'm only twenty-one, I've seen fifty such serio-comic tragedies played out in the Hills, and elsewhere. But Joan is so sweet. Joan, wild though she is, is as pure as a little cloistered saint. I love—Joan" . . .

Eleanor was claimed for the dance.

Long after she had vanished, the simple words, and the exquisite modulation of the tone in which they were uttered, haunted his brain, and lingered on his ear like a strain of minor music, with its mingled passion, pathos, and appeal.

"*I—love—Joan*" . . .

Guy Arden sat on, with his head buried in his hands, Should he shut up Braybrooke, and clear? Get his brother to join him and go off to the plains. Any-

where, anywhere, to forget. Then, his sweet vision passed before him; "she only likes you as yet—just a wee bit better than other men." Yet the words seemed to gather stress and significance as he thought over them. He seemed to hear Joan singing in the old Court, and her child lying in her arms.

Is Eleanor Angel and Devil, Saviour and Temptress, in one?

* * * *

Meantime Eleanor—floating in her partner's arms:

"Why did I tell him that, when I wanted to rescue her, and ostracise him? What mad and irresponsible fools women are. They never can keep their fatal tongues quiet. They do good one moment, to undo it the next. But Joan's as good as gold—and strong."

* * * *

Eleanor slipped from the ball-room, and stood out on the portico which looked over the terrace below. She had staked all on a chance. Guy loved her not. The wild music burst forth on the night, and infected her. On that impulse she acted. Music swayed her, as the wind sways the reed. She snatched the pomegranate flower from her hair, and dropped the blossom in a hand outheld.

The big bell in the clock tower tolled one. Eleanor stood leaning on the balcony. The full tone—long drawn out—died in solemn waves of sound upon the night.

* * * *

Joan Fitz-Alan and her child were romping together on one of the ruddy terraces of Rathmore, which led,

by flights of steps, down into the Holt; where, in the green woodland glades, the "leafes were large and longe," and all dappled by the gay glad sunshine, in which Joan and Dottie basked.

Cowslip balls. O, that we two could feel again the wild delight shoot to our hearts as the soft golden treasure sped and crushed into our hands.

O daffodil days; nothing, in after life, ever equals such extacy as thine, nor yields such gold as thine.

Dottie was in that Paradise-stage of life; and Terrace and Holt echoed to her screams and shouts of glee, and Joan, who was a child in years and lightness of heart, was almost as joyful. She was content to play games and "make believes" with Dottie, by the hour together—her "live doll."

Crescy Fitz-Alan didn't care for the child, because it wasn't a boy.

But in these days, through all Joan's natural gaiety, there ran an under-current of consciousness, that "somebody" was sharing this glad, green earth, not far away, and making it all the gladder. The thought ran through all. And when she wasn't even thinking of "somebody," she was yet joyously conscious of "somebody's" existence.

So, when her husband, who was sitting and smoking on the low wall of the terrace, absently watching their pranks, said—

"You ought to get Jean here, for Guy Arden;" Joan flew laughing to his knee, with her wildest kitten ook, the irresponsible look of a kitten when dazzled with running after its own tail, and dazed with wild hilarity; and its round eyes look everywhere

and settle nowhere, and see nothing. She really hadn't much more thought or reflection, in those days, than that same kitten.

"Cress, you're a positive angel, and a wizard. You've divined my pettest thought and dream. O, I'm going to have the biggest fun with those two. I'm going to make that match. But not a hint to him, mind; not even chaff. That would spoil it all. O, wouldn't it be grand to have Jean settled near me at Braybrooke?"

"'Pon my soul, it would be a grand match for her; I rather like that boy."

"So do I. I *love* him. And he'd just suit Jean. I believe you want to get her here for your self, Cress. Do you remember, at Paris, how you always used to kiss Jean, when you couldn't kiss me? She liked it better than I did."

He laughed.

"She seemed to take to it kindly. I used to shut my eyes, and make believe it was Joan."

"You fraud! Well, as soon as ever she has done her visit to Aunt Lucindy, I'll get her here. She mustn't go to India. She'd get married to a certainty. She has been engaged three times already."

"I doubt if Guy is a marrying man. He has had too good times, as a bachelor."

"He'll never resist Jean."

"I want to go to Austria next autumn, shooting. You can have Jean then. Then I shan't mind leaving you."

Joan clapped her hands, and gave three high springs into the air. The she caught up Dottie in her arms,

and went spinning round and round, along the sunshine terrace, laughing and singing as she went.

"Madcap," said Cress Fitz-Alan, as he watched her; "I wish I could feel like that again."

SILHOUETTE IV

Come for.

The Carmagnole.

Guy Arden was beginning to weary for a sight of Joan Fitz-Alan. And, sick at heart, and having nothing better to do, rode in the direction of Rathmore. Very likely she might be on her way either to or from the Lightfoots.

His stars were blest indeed. The first sight he saw, as he got into the high-road, was Joan, her horse taking off for a big leap, out of mere wantonness. And no groom was with her.

"Against orders," said he to himself. "Fitz not at home. Charming little Joan out on the loose."

They gallopped, like two knights riding atilt, and met mid-way. Joan looked radiant.

"How is it that you always take compassion on me when I am lonely and alone? Cress has gone to town. And I have lost poor old Evans—positively lost him. I expect he's "gone away."

"So should I, in his place," said Guy, laughing. "It doesn't matter now; but I hate to have you riding over these lonely hills, all by your little self. An ugly girl might possibly do it with impunity; but you—"

She laughed back in answer, mocking; but, instead of idle compliment, or flattery, met a look that made her heart flutter, and her eyes fall. She averted her face quickly, to hide her blush. And still she saw the passion of that look.

"Will you never go out alone again, if only for my sake?" he asked, with a suspicious tremble in his voice.

"I'll never start alone Guy, that I promise you."

"Incorrigible," he muttered. "I don't wonder Fitz finds it hard to manage you. Then I shall have to spend all my time, dodging about the roads, to look after you. Where were you going?"

"To see Nell."

"Well, we won't go to Nell. If you will allow me, we will go back to Rathmore. I was on my way, for I could stand exile no longer. Three whole days Joan, since we met."

"You don't say so? Yes, I was beginning to think it long."

"Were you?" he asked, eagerly. "Then you do give me a thought sometimes?"

"Often. I never had a brother, because—I mean because I never saw them. So I don't know what it's like. But, do you know Guy, I think I must love you like a brother."

His dark olive face flushed.

"Well, let it go at that. I am well content that it it should be so. From this day forth, we are brother and sister. Is it a compact?"

"Yes."

"Your hand upon it. So many men and women

are brothers and sisters now-a-days. We will join the great fraternity."

And, along the narrow coach-paths, between the hop gardens, brother and sister "paced" hand in hand.

Long dream of a summer day. Why won't time hang weights upon such hours? But they just drift sparkling by. The silver links gulfed in the dark shades of Avernus.

Over the woods, the old Elizabethan home of Rathmore, where the Fitz-Alans had lived for centuries, spread its noble sixteenth century wings; the great oriel windows glittered in the sun; the Tudor turrets, mellowed and hallowed by time, shone ruddy.

"Dear old place," said Guy, "I like it better than Braybrooke. *It's home.*"

Joan went to change her garb, and the two-year-old peeped in; she was clothed in what looked like a fancy "shimmy," nothing more, and her lint-white hair was all in a ruffle about her lovely little face. Guy felt it was just a "Baby Joan." Dottie and Guy had become great chums.

"You look as if you'd just got out of bed, Dot."

Dottie trotted solemnly to him, the little "shimmy" held full of toys, and gravely regarded him. He lifted her to his knee; and she dropped all her toys in a heap, and put her little warm arms round his neck.

"Why do you love me?"

"I love you, 'cause I love you," said Dottie.

A woman's answer surely? It was the second

innocent confession he had received that day.

"And I love you, Dottie."

He threw his arms round the little child, and pressed her to his heart.

Wild Guy Arden, in those moments, felt a paragon of domestic happiness. The future was nowhere. The present was supremely blest. Yet more did it seem so, when Joan appeared, and they sat down to tea in the gloamin'. They two were alone. When she passed his cup, involuntarily his hand held hers.

"Guy!"

"Am I not your brother? Are you not the little sister I dearly, passionately, love?"

"But do brothers ever love sisters passionately, that is the question?"

"Of course they do. But Joan, I must teach you."

"Have you sisters?"

"No. I have—one brother."

"Why did you never tell me about him?"

"Why did you never tell me about your brothers and sisters?"

Joan was about to speak; then began to laugh.

"Oh, I have so many, I couldn't attempt to describe them. And I'm afraid they are not very interesting, any more than I am. But about your brother? What is his name?"

"Black. Black Arden."

"Really Black?"

"Yes, really Black. He left England some years ago. I've scarcely seen him since. He has a splendid voice, and he is an actor."

"Has he never acted in England?"

"Never."

It was evident to Joan that Guy Arden was not communicative about his brother; and that there was some mystery.

There was a long mirror at the end of the room; Joan was standing, and Guy Arden drew her towards it.

"I want to see as many Joans as I can," said he.

The shades were deepening fast about them; and they stood so close together that Joan could hear the riotous beating of his heart. He passed his arm around her.

Joan, my little sister Joan."

And, ere she knew, her fair head sank upon his breast.

Behind them, a door stood open into the hall; and, though the light was waning, surely Arden was rash? Though, so innocent was Joan, and so guiltless of all evil intention, that, had her husband walked in at that moment, she wouldn't have thought anything of it. Suddenly, through the shadows, and reflected in the mirror, Joan saw the figure of a woman, with a hood drawn low over her head, so that her features were almost hidden in the darkness of the folds; Joan started, and looked round; the woman was bending forward, her hands clasped together, and extended a little before her; her whole attitude gave the impression of despair, and urgent supplication. Joan, believing that she was a tramp, who had perhaps gone mad from starvation or misery, went towards her, half frightened.

Who are you? What do you want?" she cried.

Then she seemed to see, beneath the hanging hood, a strange and ghastly pallor, a strange prominence of gleaming teeth, and the woman, still in the same attitude of despair, but never speaking, drew back, and so receded into the darkness of the hall. Joan followed, and flew across the hall; but, fast though she ran, the strange woman had taken flight, and disappeared ; and Joan, running, found herself face to face with a very different figure, all sprightliness and spangles—her sister-in-law, Augusta.

"Did you see a woman? Did you meet a woman? " cried Joan, breathless.

A woman? Good gracious no child. What do you mean?"

"A woman with a hood over her head, and a dreadful face. She held her hands so. She must be a beggar. She looked *starved.* But where can she have gone ?"

Augusta Fitz-Alan started, crossed herself, and turned deadly pale.

"Oh Gus, you must have met her? There is but one door, and you must have come in, as she went out."

"I met no one," reiterated Augusta emphatically. "It's all your silly fancy, child. You are full of fancies. But, come now. Tell me all about her?"

And Augusta sank into a seat, untying the strings of her cape, and throwing it from her shoulders, as if quite overpowered.

"I was standing before the mirror with Guy Arden, in the yellow room, when I saw the reflection of the woman, standing in the doorway. Somehow, I felt

frightened, and went up to her. She had a hood drawn nearly over her face, and was holding her hands just so. I asked her what she wanted, but she never spoke. She seemed to glide backwards, into the hall. I caught a glimpse of her face ; and O, Gus, it was like death. I saw all her teeth. It was like a deathshead."

"Stuff and nonsense, child. Guy, did you see anything?"

"Nothing, I confess. But then, I wasn't looking."

"I am as sure of it, as I am of my own name," said Joan, vehemently ; "and equally sure that she must be starving."

She ran out of the hall into the Quadrangle, and they heard her calling for Ripley, one of the men-servants.

Augusta Fitz-Alan held up her finger emphatically, for silence. Then she opened her eyes wide, made one of her mad grimaces, compressed her lips, shook her head, and passed her handkerchief across her forehead. Her withered, bejewelled hand trembled more than usual.

"Guy, *you know*," she muttered.

"Had Joan never heard of her?"

"Never. Cress forbid anyone to mention it to her."

He looked struck.

"That is certainly very strange. She must have heard."

"Never. O, Guy, what has she come for? for whom? God help us all."

"My dear Augusta, you exaggerate. In spite of

all I have heard, I never believed in her existence. Nor do I now. It's all bosh."

"Facts speak for themselves. And after Joan's description—she never having heard her described, nor even mentioned, the veriest sceptic must believe. She came before my father died. God help us."

His heart gave an exultant bound within him. He banished the treacherous thought as quickly as it arose.

"Let us forget it all," he cried lightly, "there's nothing in it. When I see, I'll believe."

Then there was a burst of laughing voices without. Jemmy Jessamy, Eleanor Lightfoot, and the portly hilarious Vicar—a very old flame of Augusta's—all entered with Joan. A very babble and babel of voices.

Volatile Joan had already forgotten the woman with the hood. Augusta jumped up, anxious to forget her trouble; but still looking unlike herself.

"Well met. Now Joan, they shall all stay to supper, a good old-fashioned supper. We want cheering up. We are terribly hipped. Joan and I dined early. We'll have a champagne supper—champagne and oysters."

"Done with you, Miss Augusta," exclaimed the Vicar, rubbing his hands hilariously. "I'm in for a good time. How do, Arden ?"

They all sat down to the round table in the old dining-hall, which was panelled throughout with carved oak, beneath a vaulted roof. Beyond the great doors, which stood open to the moon-lit Quadrangle, might be seen the red-brick archway,

ivy-hung; and walls of great roses, hanging down their heavy fragrant heads on dark myrtle, whose glistering arms upheld them. Through the archway, the full and rising moon.

Inside champagne flowed freely. Joan was in her maddest mood—mad with high spirits—as was Nell Lightfoot. The Vicar, shining with high feeding and content, let his glass be replenished with delightful unconsciousness—like the widow's cruise—and the two young men were game for anything.

Augusta, her tongue loosened, her cap, consisting of a butterfly and an upstanding aigrette, very much on one side, was relating with a dash of impromptu color, one of the already florid and racy adventures of her youth; an adventure which called forth roars and peals of laughter from the men and girls assembled. The hero, an Italian Count, to whom she had once been affianced.

After which, the banquet degenerated into a romp. They fell to chasing one another round the hall, till Nell and Joan were wellnigh exhausted with laughter.

"Let's go into the Quad, and dance the 'Carmagnole' by the light of the moon," cried Nell Lightfoot. "I've just been reading 'Two Cities,' and it's got into my veins. Hands round."

They were all pretty mad. In another moment, wild Arden and wild Joan, Jessamy, the dapper carpet-knight; mad Nell Lightfoot; fat parson, and ancient spinster, formed the fantastic circle, and were whirling wildly, hand in hand; round and round they flew, heeling and toeing it, flinging up their legs, and capering madly. The revolutionary spirit which fired

Eleanor, fired all. The effect was electric. They danced with all the frantic zest, the fire and frenzy of the "Carmagnole."

The Vicar's coat-tails flew, Gus, minus butterfly, with wig awry, and streamers streaming; Nell and Joan, with loosened tresses whirling round them.

By the light of moon, they resembled wild Bacchantes. And as they danced, they sang.

Moonstruck.

Nothing is too Light for Thee
Moonshee Moonshee Rhapsody!
Lack-wit lad,
Or love-sick lass
Fall the victims of thy "Pass"—
Tweedledum and Tweedledee,
Mouth awry
And flummery!

Nothing is too *weird* for Thee,
Moon-eyed, moon-eyed mystery!
Weave the web
And set the loom—
Lure the wanderer to his doom—
Steal the brain and shake the skull,
Numskull—blockhead—changeling—
Gull!

Nothing is too fair for Thee,
Gliding—gliding—Fantasy!

Tinct the flower—
Gild the frond—
Shiver on leaf
Thy crystal wand—

Hoar the trunk and frost the branch
In silver-silent
Avalanche—
Stain the dusk
And seal the dye
In flowery mystic charactery.
'Broider night
And 'blazon sky
In gorgeous gild of Heraldry !

SILHOUETTE V

"Mammy, sing it agen."

THE ANGEL'S SONG.

Dottie was ailing, and had been for some days, with one of those sudden ailments with which a delicate child runs down so rapidly, for her spirit had outgrown her strength.

A doctor was sent for. The doctor looked very grave when he spoke to Augusta. And Joan nursed her child night and day; and sat out in the sunshine with her, rocking and singing. Dottie was her one thought.

Augusta, who was as fond of the child as she could be of anything, was distracted with anxiety. She feared—and the doctor feared—that Joan was going to lose her.

But what may not a mother's tender tendance do? One night the child seemed much better; and Joan over-joyed, sat in the nursery and watched her playing with her toys. She set them out in quaint array, in a little low chair. Her little Noah's Ark people, she was so 'specially fond of. There was Noah and Mrs. Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japhet. And Mrs.

Shem, Mrs. Ham, and Mrs. Japhet. All the dolls of our childhood. Dottie fingered them lingeringly and lovingly; she hadn't played with them for days, and she kissed each one, as she set it down.

"Mammy'll come to you in the morning," said the little mother to her progeny, "and Mammy'll wash you and dress you, and take you for a walk. You be dood boys and girls. And wait till Mammy comes."

Dottie formed a little regiment of them, four in a line. The women stood in front. Noah, and his three sons, behind—all very upright and angular, and all facing one way. Joan laughed, as she looked at them. Then Dottie stuck a little windmill behind them, and planted out five little stiff trees, which completed the picture.

"You be dood boys and girls, and wait till mammy comes."

Then suddenly the child seemed to have spent all her energy. She trotted to her mother.

"Dottie's tired," said she.

Joan wrapped her little treasure in her shawl, and carried her off to bed. She was already asleep—sleeping sweetly—with one little wooden soldier, in a cocked hat—her peculiar favourite—tight clasped in her arms.

Joan watched her, with a heart lighter than it had been for days. There had been moments when the wild thought had come to her—suppressed as soon—that Dottie was slipping from her. Gus, in a wonderful dressing-gown, stole in, and looked at the sleeping child.

"Joan, she looks ever so much better."

Tears, for the first time, rushed to Joan's eyes. They were tears of joy. Worn out, she laid down and slept. Not for long. Ever such a slight sound roused her.

Dawn was breaking. The Gates of Heaven just slowly rolling open, to the gold-winged Angels of the dawn. And her child?—Her little Dottie?—

Joan knew.

But a Great Hand on her heart, kept her brave and still. Dottie's eyes were opened wide, and she was listening upward, between the faintly-coming breaths, with such a smile of rapt delight as Joan had never seen before, nor ever could have imagined.

Poor Joan couldn't hear that song, she was very far away. But Dottie was near—so near—

"Dottie, Dottie," she cried wildly and urgently.

The little face brightened yet more.

"*Mammy—sing—it agen?*"

A low broken moan was the only answer.

But Dottie heard her mother sing. And went.

* * * *

"How is Joan?" asked Eleanor Lightfoot, almost in a whisper.

Augusta, looking very haggard indeed, led the girl into her own sitting-room.

"O, she is pulling through; but it's nearly killed her. The boy was born before his time; and the mother nearly died. Joan lies there like a little ghost, and never speaks. She has never looked at the baby. And he's such a strapping boy, not like our little delicate darling."

And Augusta wiped the tears from her eyes.

"And the Rathmore ghost," asked Eleanor fearfully.

"O, that Rathmore ghost," Augusta shuddered. "Aye Eleanor, it appeared to Joan that day you came, the very day before dear little Dottie was taken ill. It came for her. Little did I think the summons was for her. I thought be sure, 'twas Cress. He's such a wreck."

"How dreadful it must be to have an old place, with a family ghost. Does it always appear?"

"Always, before a Fitz-Alan dies; and has done for centuries, either to one or other of the household; but never to the one it comes for. I saw her standing at the head of the stair, before my father died, just outside his door. "O, don't talk of it."

"And I mustn't see dear Joan? Not even peep at her through the door?"

"The doctor says no. It's as much as her life is worth But O, you'll see, she's young. She'll be up and out in no time. She'll trample down her sorrow. And she'll take to the baby. You'll see."

"Yes," said Eleanor, with the tears in her eyes. "She will not wear her heart on her sleeve. But she will never forget Dottie, not to her dying day. If I read Joan aright."

* * * *

Augusta's prophecy, at last, came true.

Joan got well and got up. Joan, so fair, and fragile, as to appear almost like a little spirit herself, sat out in the sunshine, and received her visitors. Joan herself, put the baby for the first time, in his father's arms, and said,

"There's your boy at last."

Joan rode and drove. Joan laughed and danced, and flirted worse than ever. Joan never sat and rocked her baby in the sunshine. Joan never sang. Her song somehow, had got strangled in her throat.

SILHOUETTE VI

MUMMERS.

Autumn days drew on apace. Crescy Fitz-Alan went off to Austria for his shooting. Joan utterly refused to leave Rathmore for change of scene; nor did she want even Jean with her; nor indeed anyone but "dear old Gus," who was never in her way, let her have her own way in everything, spoilt her worse than ever; played "propriety" and looked after, and nursed the heir of Rathmore.

Augusta, the soul of good nature, gave up her beloved little Villa at Montreux, for the coming season, to be with Joan, as she couldn't induce her to go with her there.

"No, poor little dear, she shall have her way," soliloquized Gus, "Cress has his pleasures and amusements; Joan must have hers. Guy Arden shall come as much as ever he likes; and they shall have a real high old time. I'll wink at it all, and sit tight. Why shouldn't a womau have her fling, as well as a man? It would be shameful if it were not so. It's lucky for us, that we can lie low. Only one woman in five hundred, is fool enough to make an *esclandre* I know Joan is very goody, or was, she is too innocent to be otherwise. But somehow,

since little Dottie died, well, I think poor little Joan is a bit reckless. O, bless your heart, it all recalls the joys and sorrows of my youth. A woman can't hold by one man all her life. It would be bore—bore, and more than one could possibly expect of her. A woman has a large heart, and must divide and share accordingly."

By which axiom, it will be seen, that Augusta's code of morality, was composed of very lax elastic, so slight and loose indeed, from constant strain, that it had been worn to a shred, and tied into a multiplicity of knots, in vain hope of tightening it.

It snapped at a moment's notice.

As for Joan, she ran out on to the terrace, on that sweet September morning, to find all the paths in the labyrinth, cobwebs and dew. Cobwebs aerial, treacherous structures, thrown across from bower to bower. Cobwebs, a mystic maze of fairy rings. Cobwebs, aureolas of misty mesh. Cobwebs, the "cat's cradle" of childhood. Cobwebs, a twist and twine of dazzling dew-drop gems. Long, lazy skeins of gossamer floated on the air, strands from the distaffs of the Angels, and every leaf glistened silver-dew.

Joan herself, as she flew through the fairy tracery—and caught the gossamer as she flew—might have been a spirit of the dew and dawn; a little more of the sprite, a little less of the Fay, than of old. Even, it might be thought, the dawn had stolen the tincture of gold from the lint-white locks; and the dew—or was it tears?—washed the blue from the laughing eyes.

It was Joan, and not Joan. Joan, more prone to wild and constant laughter. Joan, gowned in the height of Parisian fashion, as gay and irresponsible as the butterfly that flew o'er head.

Even as she ran, she laughed; she laughed at her own thoughts; she laughed aloud, a peal of elfin laughter.

Joan gathered a knot of autum blossoms and berries, and fastened them in her belt and on her breast. Joan deftly lifted her skirt, and waltzed and sang, her voice had come back as thrilling and resonant as ever. It was a song that Guy Arden had set to music; the echo of it seemed to call him to her.

For, during her pranks and preens, the sun had risen over ruddy Rathmore and the low green hills; and, through the glades of the golden forest, rode her lover. It was a tryst. Augusta Fitz-Alan, standing in one of the windows, and dandling the baby, saw the meeting, and laughed, and tossed the baby higher than ever. 'Twas as good as a play to her, to watch the two young folk. Guy Arden now came and went at all hours; he almost lived at Rathmore.

Yet Augusta loved her brother. Augusta was proud of the Fitz-Alans, of Rathmore. If anyone had whispered even the rumour that Joan might leave him and her home for ever, it would have been as if a bomb had burst at her feet. So fool-hardy and irresponsible are women-folk, she never thought of that.

Guy dismounted, and bare-headed, leading his horse, advanced to meet her. He hadn't heard her

sing before since—

He began to sing the refrain; Joan chimed in, and ran to meet him.

"How dear of you, Guy, to come so early. Tie up your horse, and Jones shall come to him. See, he will be all right here"

"And Gus is watching us from the window; and laughing, I'll wager. Let's go home through the home-wood, there's an hour to breakfast yet."

Without more ado, they plunged into the russet bracken, and the rabbits fled, and the burnished pheasants whirred in all directions overhead.

"I dont know what Fitz would say, if he saw us poaching in his preserves. I'm always at Rathmore now. But now that he is away, it's only right that I should be here to take care of you.

Joan gazed up at him intently, and then laughed outright.

"But would "Fitz" appreciate your solicitude so very much?"

"Why not, little Joan? Fitz knows me of old."

He drew her hand through his arm, and, holding it in his they sauntered on together.

"He could have nothing to say to this. The early halcyon days of Eden; and we will avoid the apple-orchard, the great red and yellow and russet apples, towards which I look with longing eyes. No doubt it was a fine ribston-pippin that did all the mischief, or so I once heard an Evangelical parson suggest. Let us avoid the apple-orchard Joan."

"O, but I do love apples."

"But you mustn't love them. Anyway, they are

not wholesome food for little girls. Lead me from temptation, not into it."

For answer, Joan linked her two hands over his arm, and gazed up into his eyes; her full rose lips parted in an enchanting smile; to show, in two serried rows, the little dazzling pearls. Her very glance was a challenge, and almost imperceptibly, she drew him toward the orchard.

"I warn you, if I eat one of those red apples, red through to the heart, warmed by the sun"—

"What then?"

"I shall want to kiss you."

O, but you must not. See here Guy, I have a safe guard and a shield.

She had a long white sun-bonnet, hanging on her arm, shaped liked a tunnel; she put it on her head, and peeped out at him; her face, in the dim perspective, appeared like a little star, dimmed by fleecy cloud.

"Where did you get that extraordinary object" asked Guy laughing. "And why do you wear it?"

"I wear it, I tell you, as a safeguard and a shield," said she demurely; and tied it beneath her dimpled chin.

"You only make me worse, and you know it. You know, that in that thing, you are perfectly and consumedly bewitching." He turned back the brim a bit. "I see light ahead, glimmering through the tunnel. Are those your eyes, or teeth? Blue lights, that's a danger-signal."

She gave a quick little flutter of a glance; then

snatched down his hands, and vaulted the low red brick wall into the orchard. There she picked the biggest, and reddest, and juiceyst apple she could find, and presented it to him.

"We share and share alike?" he said, and placing the apple on the wall, laid his finger across it, brought his fist lightly down, and split the apple in twain. Inside it blushed like a rose, aye, to the very heart of it. He gave one half to Joan.

"Partners, or nothing. O Joan, that you and I might be partners for life."

"And if I eat this, shall I know good from evil? Or will they get mixed?"

She poised the apple on her palm—her blue eyes raised to his.

"I think they'll get mixed. They always do sooner or later. That makes the spice of life."

"How nice," said Joan.

And, looking at him, with all her blue eyes, set her little teeth in the apple. They sat on the wall, swinging their feet, and eating apples till they were tired. Guy Arden leaned along the wall, towards Joan.

"Joan," he said softly, "hear me? Once you cared for me—as a brother? Do you like me better now? Of late I have thought you did—or—is it my fancy? Tell me—Joan—darling. Though you and I can never be more to one another than we are—at least—tell me that you love me?"

Joan averted her head, or rather, her bonnet. Who could make love to a girl in a thing like that? *It* appeared to be violently agitated. There was a

big loose bow on the top of it, which gyrated like the cowl of a chimney. He laid his hand on hers. Was she weeping?

"Joan? Little Joan?"

His voice quivered with tenderness.

"O *don't*," gasped Joan at last, "you'll kill me."

She put her hands to her face; and there could be no further doubt, that she was shaking in a convulsion of suppressed laughter. These fits of unreasoning mirth had piqued and puzzled Arden before now—from the very first of their acquaintance. What girl, dying of laughter, could feel passion, or even sentiment? Impossible. But perhaps she was hysterical?

"I don't know how it is," said Joan at last, wiping the tears from her eyes; "but always, the more I feel, the more I laugh. It isn't that I do not love you Guy, I do. But how do you want to be loved?"

Pushing back her sun-bonnet, she turned on him appealing eyes, like violets wet with dew. He was pacified What man wouldn't be?

"Like a lover, like a husband," said he passionately, "tho' it be but in name. Who knows Joan, but that in some future plane, you and I may be united yet? I live for that. If I can never marry you I'll live and die a bachelor."

Joan smiled and sighed, and twisted the little golden barrier on her finger. Then she took off her wedding-ring, and raising it to one eye, like a spy-glass, looked at him through the medium.

"If it were not for Cress—and this," said she, "I'd be your wife to-morrow. For I do love you dearly,

dearly, as much as it is possible, I think, for one human being to love another. But this"—added Joan emphatically; "this little golden shackle fetters me, as long as Cress lives; and I don't want him to die. O no, I've got quite fond of the dear old boy. At first, he bored me terribly."

She slipped on her wedding-ring.

"But you shall be my second husband, Guy. You are my husband. I am your wife. Will that content you?"

She smiled down at him; her big bonnet hanging down her back; and he, for answer, slid down to the ground, and put both arms round her waist; Joan threw both arms round his neck. Then—in another moment—she had slipped through his clasp, vaulted the low wall, and was off like an arrow. Her elfin laughter echoed back on the breeze.

Ere Guy followed, he stood leaning on the wall, deep in thought. He had seen Joan in twenty varying moods; but this Joan was yet a new Joan. What did she mean? How far would she go? A wild temptation shook his very soul, and stirred and roused his passions to their depths. Every smile and glance had been a challenge. And yet?—and yet? The heart, the soul of Joan—his own sweet Joan—was wanting? This fantastic whimsical sprite, who had been playing with him, was not the same Joan who had learned to blush and tremble, at his approach. True, the loss of her little one had made her wild and reckless. He was more madly in love than ever; and yet his heart was as heavy as lead within him. He seemed to have lost Joan, his own sweet

Joan, she had drawn nearer, she had gone further from him, clean out of ken. He had gained and he had lost.

"She has been trifling with me after all," he soliloquized. "She means nothing. She is mindless, brainless, shallowhearted. She has maddened me. She has repelled me. She has bewitched me. The die is cast. I'll stake all on a single throw. I'll bet evens, Joan will be mine; or, I'll be the devil's. O Joan, Joan, Joan, you've clean undone me. You have given me of the apple, and I did eat. It is always the woman does it. I meant to be loyal to you, loyal to Cress Fitz-Alan, loyal to myself. But now, God help me, it's all up. I'm a traitor."

* * * *

Guy Arden determined to stake two souls on one cast of the dice. It wasn't till towards evening, that fortune favored him. All day he and Joan had been playing the wildest, maddest pranks. Her spirit infected his. The old Quad rang with their laughter. Gus told them they couldn't have behaved worse had Eleanor Lightfoot been there. But towards evening, Joan disappeared. Guy retreated to the library, to smoke and plot. And still there was the same void in his heart.

Some false chord had been touched, and would jar within him. His heart was wrung till it ached. His heart ached for Joan, the Joan he was about to destroy, the Joan whose soul he was ready to barter. And still, the wild shrill laughter pained and saddened him.

How the autumn wind sighed and keened about

those old turrets. It was ghostly—sad. Would Joan never come? Cress Fitz-Alan seemed to be sitting in the chair opposite; his long dark hair hung lank across his brow; his haggard eyes were worn and hollow. He sat alone. His hearth was empty.

Joan's little dead child came through the door. It was the strangest fancy. The warm little arms were clinging round his neck. Her voice whispered in his ear, "Dottie loves you."

Guy Arden sprang to his feet. "This old place is full of ghosts. Am I mad?"

He strode to the window. Conflicting passions surged within him.

At that moment a sound, light as the fall of dead leaf on oaken floor, made him turn with a start, it was Joan herself, framed in the archway; she had changed her parisian costume for a simple black gown, which trailed behind her; from out the great Medicis collar, rose the long fair throat, and little sunny head, like a blossom from its sheath. She had changed her mood with her garb, he could see that at once. The sweet innocent face no longer rippled with smiles and laughter, though there was the suspicion of mirth still, lurking on the lips and in the eyes; but it was almost shadowed and quenched by regret, by remorse, by a tear? It was his Joan, his sweet innocent Angel-Joan! Her presence hushed the discord, filled the void. Once more her mood rang in true and perfect harmony with his. Yet he was fearful too, lest time and thought had brought about some revulsion of feeling, which might checkmate him at the eleventh hour. Yet, such is the inconsistency of

man, he wanted to believe her all that was pure and true and loyal, as he had ever done. Her purity and innocence were her charm for him And must be forfeited for him alone. He only said—

"Joan, how long you have been away. I thought you would never come."

"Haven't I been with you all day?" she asked, with a kind of arch sadness"; and laughed and ballyragged till I am wearied out? I am positively exhausted with laughing."

She sank into the arm-chair opposite, and taking a feather-fan from a table near, gently waved it to and fro.

"And why have you taken off that pretty frock of yours, and come back to me robed like a nun? Not that I don't like you best so after all. You look like a flower"

"Don't flatter me. I come to you "robed like a nun," because I come as a Penitent. As Nell says "I am come to fess." This morning, I think I was "fey." When I went out to meet you, I felt capable of anything wild and foolish and reckless; I was going to say, wild and wicked. I get fits on me of that kind now—anything for excitment. Anything Guy —to—forget. I had this mad fit on me. I dressed up, and was very near piling on all my brightest colors, pell-mell, as is the fashion. Then I couldn't help myself, I began to sing, that song you wrote and set to music. "Joan—Joan—Joan"—my heart was light as air. I wanted to charm you, to lure you on. To make you love me more than you had ever done before. In that apple scene, in the orchard, I was

just *entétée.* I was *off my head.*"

"O Joan, Joan, never act a part with me again. Be my own sweet, perfect Joan, as you are now. You say you "tried to make me love you more than I had ever done before." From the first day, from the first moment I saw you, you stole my heart away. No words of mine can express, nor can your heart conceive, what I feel for you. You are my first dear love—as I am yours. No, don't speak, you know it."

Desperate in his eagerness, his whole soul in his haggard eyes, he leaned on the arm of her chair—like a dark spirit—in strange contrast to the girl's fair innocence ; Joan's little sunny head sank back on her chair, she blushed and paled, but didn't chide him either by word or look.

"To-day, so far from making me believe you cared for me, tho' you confessed you loved me, I thought you were only trifling. I thought you could never have really cared for me. You seemed—not like Joan."

She raised her eyes to his, with a sudden radiant smile.

"But now I see, I know, I believe you care for me so much that you will sacrifice everything for my sake ; child, husband, home. You will leave all for me. We will go away together. We will have a world and a home of our own."

"O don't Guy, don't. Are you mad? What are you talking about? How could I be so cruel? How could I desert my child? and kill my husband? It would kill him. It would break his heart."

"Never. You don't know Cress Fitz-Alan yet. You are just a pretty toy, a pretty doll to him; nothing more. Don't you think I know? I do. When he goes across this threshold, his wife is forgotten for the first pretty face he meets. He is a worn out *Roué*, never worthy to have married a child like you. Believe me Joan. I speak the truth."

Joan sat up very pale, and pushed him almost fiercely from her.

"How do you know this? I think—I know—he loves me."

"Do you call that "love"? I have heard. I have seen. It was just the passion of a day. It is worn out already. He leaves you month after month. You know you are often sad and desolate and lonely. My darling—Joan—Come to me?"

She gave a little shuddering sigh, her head sank on his shoulder.

"Why not *another?*" she whispered.

"Because not another in all the world will content me, save my little first love, Joan. We were fated to come together from the first. I knew it the first time we met. *You will come?*" he whispered.

Her answer was so low that he bent his head to hear it. Their lips met in the first impassioned lovers' kiss.

Joan's fate was sealed.

SILHOUETTE VII

"DUST IN THAT LITTLE CHAIR."

Night fell. Guy Arden was gone. And Joan Fitz-Alan stood leaning out of her bedroom window, in the wintry wind. She wasn't thinking of her beautiful old home, nor regretting it. And after Guy Arden's words, her heart had hardened like a stone against the husband she had learned to love. She was upheld and inspired by a wild excitement and elation of spirit which seemed to carry her out of herself. She could think of nothing but her lover. She was fey—for love of him.

Her last night at Rathmore. The wild west wind spread his wings and flew. The smoke and saffron clouds foamed up and flew before him. Each, in its flight, ringed in fugitive splendour by the great aureola which solemnly shrined the moon. The smoke and saffron clouds, as they flew, unfurled, and passed in wreaths, and flying chains, along the purple waste. Even the fluttering stars went fluttering past. And Earth and Heaven and Joan went flying too.

Joan, in her restlessness, had arranged everything. All was ready for flight. Through cloud and moonshine, she could see the low green hill, from which rose the ancient church and grave-yard; and the dark

and crooked yews, which held unquiet spirits from wandering evermore.

She had a pilgrimage still to make. She held a key in her hand. There was a locked chamber which adjoined her own; which she had only entered once, since then. She couldn't go without bidding the wee bed farewell.

All would be left as it was—when she was gone. Augusta would see to that. She went in by the light of the moon alone. The very chair, where she had sat and watched the child, stood in the same position, and the little low chair, where Dottie stood. The Noah's Ark Regiment, four abreast, straight angular little figures, just as Dottie placed them. Joan had laughed as she looked at them. Dottie had kissed each one, and bid them wait for her. Wait? Aye, they should—till *doom*. Dust lay on them all. "Dust in that little chair." And still Joan sat on mute, motionless. And the moonlight lay on all.

"Dottie, Dottie, will you think I forget you, if I go away and leave you here alone? *Never*. I never forget Darling, never forget. They think I do. But I dream, dream, dream. All day I forget you. All night I dream. You are playing on the Terrace, you and I are gay as butterflies, and I can hear you call out, "throw it agen, Mammy, throw it agen" you say. And as I run, and throw with all my might, I wake. (O, that waking.) I have no little Dottie, I am alone—for evermore. Then I dream, dream, dream. I am sitting in the rocking-chair in the Quad, with you held close in my arms, and I sing to you all sorts of queer and sweet old

songs, such as you love; and you say to me "Sing it agen, Mammy, sing it agen." And I sing, and sing, and sing. I am never tired. Then I wake, you are gone from my arms. I am alone, *alone*. And shall be till I die."

(Joan sank on her knees before the little chair.)

"Why can't I always sleep? Would God I might."

She looked at the toys with desolate eager eyes; she stretched one hand to touch, then clasped it tight against her breast. Even the dust was sacred on those little waiting toys.

"I will not touch," said she. "All shall wait for you, as you bid them when you went away."

Joan's head sank lower, to the very dust, her arms clasping the little chair.

No sound, save the mournful wind, broke the stillness of the night.

* * * *

SILHOUETTE VIII

JOAN AND JEAN.

The same wild autumn wind that had swept over Rathmore and the Kentish hills, rose next day to a gale, over the Channel and the white cliffs of Dover. Ere night, the sea was running mountains high; and the boat, which had made a gallant effort to cross to Calais, was driven back, and had to wait till morning.

One couple, unmistakably Bride and Bridegroom, entered their rooms in the "Lord Warden," where their servants had prepared a royal supper. He was tall and stalwart, and darkly picturesque. She was a dainty lovely little blonde, with deep blue eyes and lint-white locks. He looked radiantly and exultantly bold and happy. She, scared and bewildered, and her eyes filled with tears, and her lips quivered like a frightened child.

The morning after this episode, some deeply concerned woman friend and neighbour, sought out Eleanor, and said in a tragic whisper.

"I have news for you. What do you think? Mrs. Fitz-Alan has gone off with Guy Arden. Or rather, I should say Guy Arden has run off with Mrs. Fitz-Alan. They were seen together yesterday, at Charing Cross, en route for Dover. I always thought it must come to this. Everybody said so. Poor Colonel Fitz-Alan!"

Nell Lightfoot gallopped through the gale to Rathmore. She rode like one possessed. Throwing herself from her horse, and the reins to the groom, she never asked admission, but ran straight through the courtyard into the house.

The first sight she saw startled her and sent her staggering back breathless against the wall.

"Thank God" she said, "Thank God."

It was Joan, Joan in her black gown, sitting strangely still and silent, with dark rings round her blue eyes, her flaxen hair ruffled wildly over them, and her hands listless in her lap. She scarce looked up.

"O Joan, you don't know what a fright you've given me. I heard you'd gone off with Guy Arden. You were seen with him yesterday. Where did you go?"

"I've been nowhere. That was my twin-sister, Jean."

"Your twin-sister?"

"My twin-sister. Have you anything to say against it?" asked Joan defiantly.

"No. Only that you're mad."

"Perhaps I am—or dead. I dont know which. I always had a bee in my bonnet. And now you mention it Nell, I think I'm mad. Am I dreaming that I have a twin-sister who went away with Guy? Or, was it myself?"

With the question, Joan's lips trembled piteously.

"For God's sake Joan, tell me the truth?" cried Eleanour passionately. "Tell me that you are as good and pure, as I have always thought you.?"

"No, I am neither of those. I am neither good

nor pure. Yet, Nell, I have not sinned in deed, only in thought and intention."

Tall Eleanor stepped quickly up to her, and gave her a little shake.

"You are in a dream. You don't know what you are saying, child. You went away with him after all; and then you repented and came back. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, I repented and came back. But," said Joan in a whisper, looking wistfully up at her friend. "It is true, I have a twin sister, Jean."

She motioned Eleanor to a chair beside her.

"Sit down, and I'll tell you all. Jenno and Jeannette ("Joan" and "Jean") were born together in India; they had no other brothers and sisters. They played together, they slept together, they were never apart. Joan loved Jean, and Jean loved Joan. Joan was Jean, and Jean was Joan; that was understood. Even their ayah didn't know them apart; and so she put gold bangles round Joan, and silver bangles round Jean, because Joan was born first. Joan remembers the dear black ayah, with her gay turban, gold ear-rings, and rolling eyes. Joan remembers the tall palms, standing against the deep blue sky; the wide rolling river, and the big elephants, with their scarlet trappings, lurching along the narrow streets. But it was all a dream. Then the dear black ayah took her two little white babies to sea, and carried them off to the fairest and gayest city in all the world, to their dear Aunt Lucindy. Joan and Jean lived on sweets, nothing but sweets. Aunt Lucindy loved them both the same. Dear old ayah

loved them both the same. For Joan was Jean, and Jean was Joan. Only Joan had gold bangles and Jean silver. O, they were happy in that beautiful city. They never did any lessons. They tried it, and didn't like it. Aunt Lucindy used to say 'never mind, darlings.' Baubee used to say 'it shall not be." The horrid books were shut. Joan and Jean learned to play, and dance, and sing. They wore exquisite little skirts, and learned the steps ; and were taken everywhere to dance and sing. Joan and Jean danced slow oriental dances, in Indian dress. Greek dances, singing all the time. Joan and Jean danced the Galliard, the Volté, the Curanté, the Pavane, Minuet and Gavotte, Fandango and Bolero. They were known all over Paris, for Aunt Lucindy took them everywhere. And they were very pretty. So Joan and Jean grew up to be fifteen, and very soon began to think and talk of love and lovers. But somehow, though Aunt Lucindy had married a Frenchman, they didn't like Frenchmen at all. They had begun to go to all the operas and theatres, and little white dances, and were just going to make their real débût, and go to the Presentations and the big balls, and the Bals-Poudrés, when Colonel Fitz-Alan came to see Aunt Lucindy, and said he was an old army chum of Major Tattersall, their father, and had been in the same regiment with him for years. Then he kissed them both, and took one on each knee. He was so big and dark, and had a hooked nose and fierce black eyes, like Mephistopheles in Faust. They were rather frightened of him at first ; but then he told them all sorts of tales, and made them laugh

like anything. 'I'd like to marry them both,' said he to Aunt Lucindy, laughing, 'but as I can't, I'll marry one, hanged if I won't. Which shall it be? Let's toss up. Heads or tails?' And Aunt Lucindy laughed, and said he was too old. He tossed for heads and tails, and it turned up Joan. 'She's the one I wanted,' he cried, laughing. 'I don't know why. For I wouldn't know them apart. They are as like as two sweet peas.' So Joan Tattersall was wooed, and won, and wed. For the first time in all their lives, one sister was cut off from the other. Jean was left in the whirl of it all, under Aunt Lucindy's wing. Joan was carried off by the big dark brigand, and so scared out of the few wits she ever had. But Joan got fond of her brigand. And she seemed then to be the idol of his heart. They travelled to all sorts of beautiful countries and cities. It was all like fairy land to Joan. Joan was the Fairy Queen of all. Then—"

For the first time in her recital, Joan Fitz-Alan paused; she pressed her hand across her eyes, Nell saw the sweet lips quiver, but she went on bravely, the heavy pathetic eyes were dry of tears.

"Then—Joan had a little baby. The father did'nt care for it much, because it wasn't a boy. But Joan's fairy-land changed to Paradise. Dottie was the angel of her life. Then at last they went to live at the Fitz-Alan's home, and Joan was happier than ever. Her two chums in all the world, after her twin-sister Jean, were Nell Lightfoot and Guy Arden, though they were both 'new chums.' Soon it seemed as if she had known them years. After a

time Guy Arden came to see her almost every day, or, they met somewhere. He told her afterwards he loved her from the first, but it wasn't so with Joan. First she liked him as a chum; then she loved him as a brother. She never thought of the other kind of love. For, though she was always thought to be a 'flirt,' she wasn't much of a flirt really. One day she was singing in the Quad. And he came. He said 'Had you an unmarried sister, the fac-simile of yourself, I'd marry her to-morrow, or die in the attempt.' Joan was just about to exclaim that she had one twin sister, when a thought, a scheme, a whole plot, flashed into her mind. Guy should marry Jean. Then Joan laughed till she could laugh no longer. He stared and wondered. 'Well, have you a sister?' he said. 'O, stacks of 'em,' Joan answered, 'and brothers too,' though she had neither brother nor sister in the world but Jean. She felt she must throw dust in his eyes. So she didn't stick at a white fib or two when she was about it. She told the same tale to Nell and everybody, on the chance of the truth never coming out. This scheme, this plot, became the absorbing dream and vision of Joan's life. And one day Cress Fitz-Alan hit on the very same idea. 'You ought to get Jean here for Guy Arden,' he said. Then she told her husband all her plot. All but one part of it which she knew would make him angry, so she dare not. He said he was going to Austria, and she must have her sister then. All this fitted in with Joan's gorgeous plot. Jean had had countless lovers, and been three times on the eve of marrying. She was a desperate flirt;

and so there was no time to lose. And all the time Joan Fitz-Alan used to wonder why the sky seemed to get bluer and the sun goldener, every day. Joan used to wonder why she liked to be sad, and liked to pray, and began to think there must be a God in Heaven, who cared for all, and Heaven seemed so near. O, Joan was very good. Joan used to steal out alone at night to listen to the nightingales, and stare at the moon; and she wanted to die then, and fly right up to Heaven. O, Joan was very good. Her heart was heavy, yet her heart was light. Happy and unhappy, all in one. Joan found out her secret—*Too late.*

"And then came black night. Joan got out of that as best she could. She lived on somehow. She was just the same. But she gave up all idea of anything above and beyond this world. God had taken away her child.

"So days ran on. Cress Fitz-Alan went away to shoot in the Thuringian forest. And Joan sent post-haste for Jean. But first, she felt she must take Augusta Fitz-Alan into her confidence. Joan intended Jean to represent herself. Jean was to be thoroughly coached in Joan's part; and pass herself off on Guy Arden if she could, as Joan. Augusta entered into the whole plot, with the greatest amusement and delight. It appealed to her dramatic instincts. She was enchanted."

("Mad, Mad old woman," murmured Eleanor aside. "Madder even than Joan!")

"They made out the whole programme. Mean-

time Jean arrived, she was in ecstasies over the cast of the piece, and at the idea of acting the heroine in it. She little imagined then how it would end, or what Joan really intended to bring about. Jean was guiltless of all design on Guy Arden, Jean, who had had all men at her feet. She thought of nothing but the wild fun and excitement of the hour ; and she had been used to acting on the stage.

"As usual, they were expecting Guy Arden to breakfast at Rathmore, and to spend a long day. Jean was to meet him, and do the honours. Jean was to personate Joan. Joan had pictured the scene a hundred times, and the church and the altar, with Guy and Jean standing side by side, vowing to love one another for all eternity. How many a time in the past she had longed, and even prayed, that her twin-sister might become the wife of Guy. But now, that it had come to the crisis, Joan could realize nothing but the glorious fast fun of it all. She urged Jean to fool him to the top of his bent ; "I have flirted with him," said Joan, "I have got on since we two swore eternal fraternal affection. But Jean must surpass Joan. She must flirt as—you can flirt. She must out-Herod Herod. You must work him up to desperation pitch. You must make believe that your sister Joan is a very naughty girl indeed." "Trust me!" laughed Jean. And so she flew off to meet him. Augusta and Joan stood watching from one of the windows, Joan hiding behind the curtain. And both laughing over it till they cried."

("Poor Guy," murmured Eleanor. "O, you're a wild lot, the lot of you.")

"They couldn't see anything of them," continued Joan. "Augusta went away with the baby. But Joan sat and watched, and watched. Somehow, when she was alone, she couldn't laugh any more; her heart was heavy. She could have cried. Then, over the trees and shrubs, she saw them for one moment, Guy and Jean, walking, just as Guy and Joan used to walk in the dear old days that seemed so long ago. And then, for the first time, Joan knew and realized what she felt for him. When she saw those two together, she cried out 'Jean is just flirting with him, Joan loves him, more than her own soul.'"

SILHOUETTE IX

JOAN AND JEAN.—"BOSS"

"Jean came back, and told them all her adventures. She was laughing like anything; and Augusta laughed, and they all laughed. Yet it seemed all the time as if Joan's heart were breaking. The sisters were left alone. Jean clasped Joan's hands in hers. 'Darling, shall I tell you a secret?' she said. 'You will never guess. Of all the men I have seen, I think this Guy Arden is the only one I could ever love. I don't know whether he is rich, or whether he is poor, or anything about him, and don't care. O Joan I'm in love at last.' 'All in this little time?' said Joan. 'All in this little time. I began in play and it ended in earnest. And O, he did seem to love me so.' Then Jean cried 'but it isn't me, it's you. It's you he loves. And if he loves Joan, and Jean loves him, then Joan must love him too? For twins always think and feel the same. Joan, *do* you love him?' She hid her head on Joan's knees and clasped her close. 'Darling,' said Joan, 'why do you ask me this thing? Married women don't love other men.' 'They do in Paris,' said Jean, 'always.' 'I'm not a Parisian, Jean, I'm a faithful wife. And I love my husband.' 'But he wasn't flirting, not a bit of it. All the time, from the first moment, I saw

he was in real terrible earnest. O Joan, you must have known he cared for you. And that you are all in all to him. He will ask you to run away with him sooner or later, you will see.' 'All the more reason,' said Joan, 'why you should personate me. If he asks *you* to do so, I want you to say 'yes,' for Joan.' Jean burst out laughing, then grew graver than I had ever seen her. 'O, I couldn't,' she said. 'What would he think of me, when he found out? He would hate me, loathe me for it. And I'd hate myself. Joan, it would be bold, and base, and cruel. Let me start fair, and make him love Jean herself.' 'No, No,' cried Joan wildly, 'I couldn't bear that. I've set my heart on this. If you don't, you'll spoil all. He'd never love you else. He'd go right away if he found out what I was up to. O Jean, you'll save him. You'll save me.

"Then you do love him?

"Jean, I love my husband. Guy will love you. He will worship you. I told you what he said. To love one, is to love the other, for we are twins in everything. For my sake, for my sake, I implore you. You are Joan, and I am Jean. Hasn't it been always so?"

"Joan talked and talked, till she almost persuaded Jean. They laughed and cried, and laughed again till they were tired. Then the real Joan went down to see Guy Arden, just for the fun of the thing. For Joan and Jean were to go in and out, like Jack in a box. One go in, t'other come on. And, shall I tell you about poor Joan? It was all up with her. She was so forlorn and desolate. Could she give him up

to Jean, the only man who loved her? Jean had troops to love her. Joan had none. Joan's little child was dead. Joan's husband cared for her no longer."

"O Joan" cried Eleanor.

"He cared for other women more. Can a faithless husband really love his wife? So Joan forgot her honour. It was all scattered to the winds. She was disloyal to herself, and disloyal and treacherous to Jean. She promised everything he asked. The very next day Guy and Joan were to go off together, unknown to all. Joan saw no more of her sister that night. She dared not face her. She locked herself in her own room, and got all ready for flight. She could think of nothing but Guy Arden. She felt wild for joy. And then—and then—Joan saw the churchyard in the moonlight, and she *remembered*. Joan went to say goodbye to that little chair, and dust lay thick on all. Nell, Joan never left her home—she couldn't

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"The next day, at dawn, she confessed all to Jean. She threw herself on her knees, and implored Jean to go instead of her. And at last, Jean promised. She made Jean promise, that (as Joan) she should make it a condition to go through a mock marriage. So yesterday, Guy Arden and Jean Tattersall were lawfully married. Nothing can separate them any more."

Joan's voice ceased; she sank back in her chair as if exhausted. After a few moments silence, Eleanor

struck her hands on her knees, with a gesture of despair.

"You've been and gone and done it this time, Joan, with a vengeance. I don't know whether you hadn't better have gone off with him yourself. 'Pon my soul, I don't. Of all the mad pranks this beats all I ever heard of. And old Gus, she must be mad. I always thought she was. How can a man who loves one woman, as he loves you, take to another, because she is a twin-sister? Jean may resemble you in form and feature, but I'll wager it goes no further. Does she resemble you in character, in any way?"

"In everything, except that Jean may be a slight exaggeration of Joan."

"Just so, a burlesque of Joan, a caricature."

"No!" cried Joan, stormily.

"Every trait in you is strained in her. O, I can well imagine. Joan is about as cracked as they make them; Jean is the same, only a thousand times more so. You have sacrificed your sister. You have ruined Guy Arden, body and soul. You will have driven him desperate. He is not a man to trifle with. You will see. He'll never forgive you. He'll do for her."

"I don't believe it," cried Joan fiercely. In a week, he'll worship her."

"Pray how long was the wretched farce to be kept up?" asked Eleanor vehemently.

"She was to tell him the same night, as soon as they reached Calais."

"Mad, preposterous," cried Eleanor, walking

about the room, and lashing her riding shirt with her whip, as if she must lash something or somebody.

"I like Guy Arden better than any man I know. I'd have done anything in life to do him a good turn. I knew he cared for you; but I did my best to keep him straight. He'd have been content to go on living near you for years, if you hadn't fooled him. And perhaps done something in the world. And then, who knows, you might have become his wife.

Joan you have done for him. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he separated from her then and there, and pensioned her off. Or, casts her off, as the case may be. You would both be well served. It's madness, it's treachery. As for Augusta Fitz-Alan, she ought to be locked up in a lunatic asylum. It isn't Jean's fault. It's Joan's. Treacherous, selfish Joan. O I'm *mad?*"

Eleanor Lightfoot hurled herself from the room.

Joan, her head bowed on her knees, and her arms thrown above it, in abandonment of despair, was left alone.

The hardest riders that winter, amongst the womenfolk, in all the country-side, were the lovely twin-sisters, Mrs. Cress Fitz-Alan and Mrs. Guy Arden. The very sudden, and somewhat mysterious courtship and marriage of Guy Arden and Miss Tattersall, created a nine days' wonder; and, at the time, all sorts of rumours had been rife. But Augusta Fitz-Alan, who could (and often did) ruin a woman's reputation by a glance or a gesture, "*un coup de bec*,"

soon silenced all that. Augusta was a staunch friend, a bitter foe. Then, having settled them all, she waltzed off to Montreux.

But there was a huntsman who outdid them all; and that was Guy Arden. He looked anything but a gay and gallant bridegroom; he looked desperately ill and haggard. He was supposed to be really in a bad way. Also, it was remarked, that fond as he appeared to be of his little gem of a wife, he passed half his time with that wild coquette, Eleanor Lightfoot. Since marrying the sister, he had evidently transferred his platonic affection from Mrs. Fitz-Alan to Mrs. Lightfoot, considering one member of a family enough.

[And, from all accounts, more than enough.]

The flirtations of Joan Fitz-Alan and Jean Arden were the talk of the County. Jean's husband might well look worn and weary, and seek consolation elsewhere. The "Tattersalls were an eccentric lot." What could you expect from the daughters of "cracked Tatters?" reputed to be the wildest and fastest man in a fast regiment.

And never once, since that day never to be forgotten by either, had Guy and Joan been alone together.

"Cress, have you never repented your choice?"

"Never."

He was smoking. She, sitting on the arm of his chair.

"Wouldn't you rather it had been 'Tails' after all?"

"No. Joan's worth a dozen of her. My pretty Joan has been blest with a minute modicum of brains. Jean is a feather-head. There's nothing in her. My belief is, she is tired of Guy already, and would run away with the first fellow who asked her."

"Little do you know," cried Jean passionately. And then she flung herself down on the floor beside him, to hide her tears.

"Jean is worth a hundred Joans," she said at last, wiping her eyes, "if you only knew it."

He laughed, and stroked her head.

"I'd rather have Joan, if you don't mind. Those two don't seem to hit it off somehow. You married them in haste Joan. And now they have got to repent at leisure, poor devils. I think Black would have suited her better."

"O, tell me about Black Arden?"

"Well, I don't want to tell you much about him. I'm an old friend of the Ardens, and Guy doesn't care to have him discussed. Suffice it, that he was a "black sheep," a very black sheep indeed; and had to fly the country. Guy pensioned him off handsomely. And he has got his name up as an actor. He is great at that. However, I liked the youngster; there was lots of good in him. But bless you, he left the country years ago. His existence, as Black Arden, is pretty well forgotten."

"Is he like Guy?"

Cress Fitz-Alan didn't hear. He was watching his son and heir, who, with his legs wide apart, was sitting on the floor, and stick in hand, banging lustily on a pewter plate, with the jerky motion

peculiar to babyhood, and making the infernal din in which babyhood delights.

"Take care of *him*, Joan. When I 'pass in my checks,' take care of my boy."

Joan laid her head back on his shoulder, and put her arms up round him.

"Dont talk so, Cress. It gives me the blues. Tell me, do you love me better than other women? Do you love me still, one little bit?"

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"Do you love anyone else besides your wife?"

"Not One. Men will be men. *Ca va sans dire.* But my pretty Joan, my sweet little Joan is the one in all the world for me. The only one I've ever seen, I've asked to be my wife. Are you content little one? And, do you care?"

"I am content. And I do care"

Cress Fitz-Alan felt serenely happy.

Next morning they drove to a distant meet, and didn't return till late.

"Little Boss," as baby Fitz-Alan was called by the household, was amusing himself on the landing, outside his nursery, by trying to beat down the banisters with a big stick, when he saw a strange woman coming slowly up the stairs. She was such a very funny woman, and she had a dark thing over her head. He peered through the banisters, and watched her. When she reached the top of the stairs, she turned, and glided slowly towards him; Boss staring at her with big eyes. Then the black thing over her head proved too much for him. He cleared, or rather toddled, as

fast as his baby-feet would carry him. Then like unto a young colt or calf, he rounded on his enemy, and stopped and stared again. Still she gilded towards him. He turned and toddled. He stopped and stared. Finally, he reached his refuge and his nurse's arms .

" Mooman, Mooman dare," he said, in high indignation, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. " Boss no like Mooman. "

The nurse, who was gossiping over her tea and hot cakes, with one of her kind, laughed, caught him up, and kissed him. She did look out ; but there was no one there. And Boss forgot the " Mooman."

One month from this date, Joan, a little lonely widow, was sitting gowned in deepest sable weeds, her fair hair tumbled, her blue eyes heavy with weeping. She was thinking of the morning after the hunt. How poor Cress was found dead in his bed. And of his tender words of the day before.

She was thinking of Nell, and how Nell had run back to her, after taunting her so cruelly, and flung herself at Joan's feet, imploring forgiveness.

She was thinking of Jean, and of her gay mad freaks, which Joan knew well, hid a sorely wounded heart.

She was picturing once again, the scene at the " Lord Warden, " when, as they sat down to supper, Jean, with tears in her eyes, and trembling for fear, fell on her knees beside her bridegroom, and cried out.

" I'm not Joan ! I'm only Joan's twin sister Jean !"

And how Guy, in his wrath and despair, rushed from the place into the stormy night.

She was thinking of Guy himself; and of his stern and stony estrangement and isolation; and wondering if he would ever forgive her. Augusta had been wired for; but had not yet arrived. She had wandered from Montreux, no one knew whither. Jean was away, Heavens knows where, and the tidings had not yet reached her. Eleanor, the ever-faithful Nell, was staying at Rathmore; but would not be back till night. Joan was unutterably alone and desolate.

No, not quite alone. The door was pushed softly open, and "Boss" peeped in, he is Boss indeed now; the Head of the House. This baby-boy had a very dark skin, like the Fitz-Alans, but his eyes were as big and blue, his hair as fair as Dottie's own, which showed in singular contrast. He was a striking looking little fellow, and bold and resolute to match. He looked his name all over.

He missed his father sorely; and half shy, and half defiant, eyed the mother he scarcely knew.

"Take care of my boy."

Those words rushed to Joan's mind for the first time.

She started to her feet; and running, kneeled to Boss. He patted her head with his two hands; and then gave her a sounding kiss. Then drew back to see the effect upon her.

That strange mother was laughing and crying too. But she caught him to her heart. From that hour, mother and son were inseparable. Boss never took the place of Dottie. Yet reigned in his mother's heart supreme.

SILHOUETTE X

"NUTS."

Nearly a year of Joan's widowhood gone by, and Boss could trot alongside her bravely.

She and Boss were going a-nutting in Braybrooke woods. The Master of Braybrooke was away somewhere in Norway, fishing; he always was away. And Jean, a grass-widow, had her house filled with guests, to solace herself in his absence.

The bang of guns rang out from the Braybrooke covers, without cessation, on the clear frosty air. Joan drove her spirited ponies along the high-road, at her usual rattling pace. Then, Basket in one hand, Boss in the other, sent them on to the stables and walked on to the Nut-woods.

They crossed one long grass glade, from which they could see a momentary glimpse of the great house. Rabbits scurried and scampered across the green solitude, in every direction; and Boss, with a shout of delight, trotted after them. It was a glorious October morning, so serene and still, that Joan had discarded her heavy black, and donned a soft white woollen suit, coat skirt and waistcoat en suite; a little crushed white felt hat stuck on her blonde locks, and only a soft black tie proclaimed her widowhood. She plunged into the nut-wood, and soliloquized, Boss and the terriers ahead.

"What a mercy it is Gus has got such a good head for business. But the idea of having to let the dear old place, and going to live "abroad," cuts me to the heart. She likes it, and says it must be done. If not she holds out the awful alternative of Rathmore going altogether some day. Had dear Cress not failed in that last speculation, or lived, all would have been well. O Boss, when you grow to be a man, won't you work for your poor little old mother? and keep the dear old home where your forefathers have lived for centuries?"

The shouts and yelps of Boss and terriers answered, one as wild and irresponsible as the other.

"Gus wants me in the future, to retrieve our fortunes by marrying some wealthy man. I can see that, though she says nothing. How could she? I couldn't. I loathe the very idea of it. No, Rathmore may go to the hammer, sooner. Joan Fitz-Alan I'll live and die."

And, to accentuate her words, Joan slashed with her cane right and left.

"Fancy giving my boy a stepfather. Were he his sable Majesty himself, "Boss" would boss him."

And Joan laughed defiantly.

"Ah, dear old Cress, I am wicked still. Faithful I have been to you, and faithful I will ever be to your memory; but, I love Guy Arden yet; and, though he's my sister's husband, could no more root him out of my poor weak heart, than I could uproot that oak. But Guy believes I have long ceased to care. Jean has even ceased to be jealous of me. Women *can* act. I could live happy at Rathmore all my days,

only to be within a few miles of Guy. And he, will he ever speak to me, or look kindly at me again? Guy, dear old Guy?"

Scarcely had she thought it, when a man came crashing through the underwood, a gun over his shoulder, a brace of setters "to heel." It was Guy. Guy, whom she had supposed to be leagues and leagues away, across the sea. She had never been alone with him since the fatal day, and rarely seen him at all; and, in spite of herself, and though she could have bitten off her lips for so doing, blushed carnation-pink (a Joan blush).

And Guy? He no longer looked stern and morose; but keen and eager at the sight of her, though even more worn and haggard of feature than when she saw him last; and, tall and athletic though he was, how gaunt? It had never struck her so much as then; and a pang shot to her heart.

"How dark and bronzed you are. I scarcely knew you," she cried hurriedly, to hide her emotion; and held out her hand. He clasped it in his. He thought her lovlier than ever, in that soft white suit.

"How soon you are back," she hurried on, gently but firmly releasing her hand from his lingering hold. What had come to him? Her heart beat wildly. "I thought you were to be away ever so long. What sport had you?"

"O, first rate. But could you think I should remain long away, when you were here?"

"O, I don't know," said Joan with affected carelessness, lashing about her hard. "I've come nutting, with little Boss. But he's ever so far ahead."

A frantic yelping sounded from afar. "There he goes. He can trot along finely now, and I can only just keep him in sight."

"Why take charge of him?"

"Because I promised, always."

"O, don't run away so fast. I gave up my shoot to be with you. Let us take it easy. I'll look after the boy, and see that he isn't lost, I promise you. There, now you may be happy. The old gamekeeper Dobbes, has got hold of him, and is carrying him on his shoulder. He can't be in safer hands."

In Joan's rather headlong career, a bramble had caught in her skirt. He laid his gun against a tree, and knelt to disentangle it. He seemed in no hurry.

"A determined follower," said he, "and a thorny one; and he has got good hold."

A ray of sunlight shot down through the bosky height above on his dark head and shooting-coat of sombre bronze; and on fair white Joan. It made a charming sylvan picture, the dogs beside them.

"Shall I ever get you free? It has even twined round the little gaitered ankle in your desperate efforts to get away from me. How could you get so caught up?"

"I don't know," laughed Joan nervously; who didn't know if she and Guy were actors in a dream, or what had befallen either. She only felt an almost irresistable impulse to caress the dark crisp hair so near her hand.

"There, now you are free. Would to Heaven I was too," he muttered. "Come, let me fill your pretty basket with nuts; you hold, and I'll gather."

He began to gather the sheathed and bossy clusters fast, and drop them in her basket. Joan gathered too. As she lifted her hands, their eyes met through the leaves. Joan blushed again, suddenly and vividly.

"Is a nut-wood conducive to shyness? asked Guy. "For once in my life I feel shy. And when I think that I once dared"—

He threw his nuts into the basket, with an air half humourous, half desperate, half despairing—

"I positively tremble. Why did you ever cross my path?" he asked, with mock gravity.

Then, with sudden change to tragic earnestness, as he saw Joan glance and smile—

"Child, you made wild havoc of my heart, in those play-hours. It was reckless and cruel of you. What induced you? You know how I am bound, tied hand and foot. I couldn't in honor respond. Were I to ask you to give yourself to me, it would be dishonourable, and base, and disloyal beyond belief. Yet, I have not been to blame. But tell me, tell me once, if you had had no tie, would you have given yourself to me?" and he gazed down at her with wild appealing eyes: "Would you have loved me?"

"Why ask me useless and impossible questions? I will not answer you!" cried Joan, pale and tembling. "It is as you say, disloyal and dishonorable even to think such things. Do you imagine I would ever leave my darling? He is my first and only thought. He is, and ever will be now, the one in the world for me."

"Then why flirt so recklessly as you do?" he cried as passionately. "Nobody would believe, to see you,

you ever had a husband. You've wrecked me. And you'll wreck many another man before you've done. You are my sister-in-law. Therefore I speak straight. What is an idle hour's pastime for you, is the ruin of a man's life. And yet, when I met you just now, and saw you blush and tremble, I could have sworn you had not been all to blame. I could have sworn you loved me. Were it not for your 'darling,' as you call him, tell me, tell me once and I'll go away from you for ever, would you have thrown in your lot with mine? Answer?"

Joan strove to speak, in vain; suppressed sobs choked her words.

"I warn you, I'm tinder; and you, with your pretty plots and wiles and graces, have set the tinder aflame. Take care you don't get scorched. You ought to know what an Arden is by now."

He looked so wild and reckless and desperate, that Joan got a sudden terror of him.

"O, let me go!" she cried.

Still he held her hands in a vice. He bit his lips fiercely, to overpower uncontrollable emotion. His eyes dimmed with tears.

"Answer me, Love, and I'll never persecute you again. Never by word or look, shall you feel that you are anything but sacred to me. As, our bonds must make us, answer, answer me. *I'll live on that.*"

If Joan could read the looks and hearts of men aright, and right well could she read them, she knew she was dealing with a desperate man, a man almost beside himself. And they two were alone.

Looking full up into his face, with the recollection

of her own madness on her, and the thought of (but for that) what might have been; with sad remorseful eyes, and lips that trembled, she said—

"To love once, with me, is to love for ever. I love you, I love you dearly. God help me, I must love you till I die."

He seemed to devour each word as it fell from her lips.

"God bless you for ever, for these words," he said brokenly.

Then he flung her hands from him; caught up his gun; and was gone before Joan could blink back the vain tears which blinded her.

SILHOUETTE XI

HER BROTHER IN LAW—JEAN "AT HOME"—

(RETROSPECT.)

Even in the midst of a whirl of gaiety, little Jean Arden loved her novelette and her easy chair. By Guy's orders, certain of the Braybrooke covers were to be shot over in his absence. The rest reserved for his return, whenever that might be. The shooters, on this special day, were all coming to dine, to meet the house-party, which consisted of a few young married couples; the wives, special friends of Jean's.

Jean really had more money and more time than she knew what to do with. She had one lovely little pink doll, a girl, and she loved it very dearly, by fits and starts. But she always loved the novel and the fireside.

In her exquisite tea-gown, she had escaped to her boudoir, and, by mingled firelight and rose-shaded lamps, was reading hard to finish her tragedy, before dressing for dinner, when her maid announced "Mr. Arden."

There stood Guy, unexpectedly returned from his Norwegian fishing. Jean was genuinely delighted, as she always was, to see him.

"Guy?" she cried.

She dashed down her book, and flew to meet him, precipitating herself into his arms, and kissing him rapturously ; whilst he hugged and kissed with interest. Was he her lover at last? Jean's heart beat at the very thought.

"You greet me more like a lover, than a husband," she said coquettishly. "Is this the effect of Norwegian air?"

Then he answered, half passionate, half deprecating, and wholly humourous.

"Jean, *forgive me*, I—can't you guess?"

Then recollection flashed to her mind.

"You are not Guy," she cried. "You are his brother, his twin brother Black Arden?"

He bowed.

"How could I help it? It is against human nature. How could any man resist such a greeting? You didn't even give me time to speak. And after all, you are my sister?"

Jean was blushing like a briar-rose.

"O, it can't be helped, it doesn't matter. Only you know, it is very wrong of you, and very treacherous. You ought to have told me at once."

"I ought indeed," said Black humbly, bowing over the little hand like a courtier. "But the fact is, Jean, I lost my head entirely. Guy gave me no idea"— And he looked the rest.

"O, I know all about that," laughed Jean. "But you know Guy is very reticent about everything. It was only a few weeks ago, before he left, that he informed me that he had one brother, a twin brother, who was soon coming to stay with us. Though I

knew he had at least one brother somewhere; Joan told me, I mean, my friend, Mrs. Fitz-Alan."

"Well, the plain fact is this, Jean. I was a very naughty boy in the days of my youth. Dear old Guy—we were always devoted to one another—took a lot of trouble about me. I wasted my patrimôny on riotous living, and he gave me a helping hand, and set me on my feet again. But I was too proud to be beholden to him; I refused to sponge on him any more. I went off, and took to singing and acting under another name. And he has never quite forgiven me."

Jean shook her head expressively.

"Guy never forgets, and never forgives."

He glanced keenly at her. The significance of her manner struck him; as he had been struck by the curtness of his brother's letter, announcing his marriage. Was it credible, that there was no love between them? That he had merely married her for her beauty? And she, him, for his money? When he first saw Jean, all his doubts about his brother fled; for he thought his new sister the loveliest and most exquisite little creature he had ever seen. He was already in "durance vile." He would watch her, and solve the mystery. When he saw Jean with other men, he said "Jealousy, I have it." When he saw Jean with himself, he had no further doubt. If ever a graceful malicious little witch set herself to fool a man, and send a man off his head, that did Jean. The first night, he soliloquised thus.

"I can't trust myself. I shall clear out of this to-morrow. Did the devil enter into dear old Guy,

that he should get me here like this, and then clear out? Or did he forget all about me? It's just like him. What the deuce is the matter with me? I've had many bad attacks; but none like this. Are twin-fellows bound to love the same girl? Great Heaven, Guy, dear old man, I've done rum things in my time, but your honour is safe with me. Your wife is sacred. I don't know what she is up to. It may be the purest mischief. Who could ever guage a woman? Guy must have found out something he didn't like. She's a wicked little witch. Whatever else she did to him, she must have clean bewitched him for the time. Just my style of beauty, no shade, not even in the brows and lashes. That would give character; but not hers, not that divine, bewitching, infantile innocence, that angelic softness. That is quite unique. I never met anybody the least like her. There's not another Jean in all the world. The eyes as blue and clear as little bits from the Lake of Lucerne, and as calm, but what infernal mischief they can do. Does she mean mischief? or doesn't she? I'll be hanged if I know. Why, if she had pink eyes, she'd be nothing but a blooming little Albino. What's in a face? Black, you're a damned fool. Jean, you're another. Goodnight and goodbye."

(Jean, before her mirror.)

"Was there ever anything so delicious? It all plays into my very hands, as if it were fate. Guy away, Joan at Rathmore. Ever since I heard of the twin-brother, it has been the dream, the romance of my life. O Joan, my darling, darling Joan, I'll make it up to you yet. It appears he is quite a reformed

character. At least, steady compared to what he was. And, though he tells me he made a fortune on the stage, and spent it as fast as he made it, and hasn't a red cent to his name; yet what does it matter? Guy will see to all that. Guy has more than he knows what to do with; and he will set them up at Rathmore. Joan will be able to keep the old place on. O, it will be grand! It will be splendid!"

Jean clasped her hands in ecstasy. In corsets and combination, she spun, and danced, and leaped, and twirled; and sang, as she danced, in Joan's own thrilling voice, if a trifle less sweetly plaintive and sympathetic. Then she sat down before her mirror again, and laughed at her own image.

"O Beauty, how could he help himself? And I am obliged to make all the running I can, to keep him here, and bring about the meeting."

She laughed gaily, and made a comic elfin face at herself in the glass.

"He gives out he is going to-morrow; and has ordered the trap for the station. We'll see who is the strongest Mr. Black, you or I. He has just jumped into love with me. O, why couldn't Guy do the same? I'm not so bad. Black is different. O, it's rare fun. There is a wonderful charm about him. He is so courtly. He makes love so beautifully. He has Guy's heart too I'll wager. Guy's heart? —O, I have been rightly served! If Guy loved Joan, and couldn't love Jean, may be Black loves Jean, and can't love Joan? O, that could never be, Who, that ever loved Joan, could love a Jean? Not Guy," she added pathetically.

"Not anyone. Joan is Joan. Jean is Jean. Joan

is a fairy, a sylph, a peri. Jean is a pixy, an elf, a sprite. Joan has blue eyes, and a mind, a soul. Jean has blue eyes, and only a foolish heart. O Guy, I'd have loved you so? Who knows, but if Black married Joan, that some little stray bit of love may come to Jean? Or, Jean died young. "Here lies Jean Arden, victim to cruel fate. Lovely and loving. Yet unrequited and unloved. She had a thousand faults; yet one virtue redeemed them all. She was a faithful wife. To her memory I raise this monument: —Her broken-hearted husband, who loved Too Late."

Jean laughed, yet dashed a tear from her laughing kittenish eyes. Then she forgot all but her plot.

"Now how shall it be done? I must keep him on a little bit It's so delightful. It's not Black. It's Guy in love with Jean. O Paradise, I'll keep it on for two or three days, at least. Then Joan must carry on the part I've begun. I shall be tired by then. It will be Joan's turn to personate Jean. She'll think it's Guy! He'll think it's Jean! Could it be carried through, or would it all come out? It's all a toss-up. I can but chance it. And if it did, what matter? They'd fall in love all the same. And if it didn't and there was only a love-scene, why it will only hasten the end."

In a whirl of excitment and delight Jean, who was a born actress, began to laugh, and dance, and sing, with graceful and wild abandon, and emphatic gesture.

Weave, Weave,
Lace and Kink,
'Tween the star fade
And the dawn.

(Chorus refrain) *Weave, weave, loop and link)*

Weave, Weave,
A mystic link
To mesh an April morn.
Leaf loop leaf
Shine loop spray,
Pulse knit pulse
In dual beat.

(Weave, weave, loop and link)

Criss, Cross,
The misty ray
To chain a bliss so fleet.
Weave, weave,
My misty loom,
She in self
And self in she.

(Weave, weave, loop and link)

Weave, weave,
'Tis thy doom
To mesh him up with Thee
Whirl, whirl,
Twine and Trend,
Weft of Fortune
Warp of fate.

(Weave, weave, loop and link)

Cast the sooth
Spin the Web,
And mesh up Mate with Mate.

Till, worn out with her wild dance, she flung herself on her bed, and fell fast asleep.

She haunted his dreams. She was up with the dawn, and met him in the dew-drenched parterre, amid a blaze of autumn foliage and flowers.

"Whither away so early?"

"Jean, I must fly from hence."

"Then it must be on Shank's mare," laughed Jean. "I am mistress here. The trap is counter-ordered; and the stables locked. Your first morning at Braybrook, and not even a shoot? The guns will be early a-field."

Jean was fastening a knot of autumn berries in her cap.

"We will bring you luncheon. And in the evening there will be a dance in your honor. I must introduce you also, to my dearest, sweetest and bosomest friend, Mrs. Fitz-Alan, of Rathmore."

"Fitz-Alan? O, I know the Fitz-Alans."

"Of course you do. But not this "bright particular star." The widow of Colonel Fitz-Alan, quite young; and O, so pretty."

"Who was she? I fancy I've heard, but I forget."

"A Miss—Miss—O, I forget. A sporting kind of name I believe; at least, a horsey one."

"Has she money?"

"So, so. At all events, enough to keep up Rathmore. But O, most mercenary of knights, to see Jenno, you'd think no more of money. But only of Jenno."

"Jenno? It seems to recall a reminiscence of my youth, a memory of my nursery days. "Jeannette and Jenno." What a name. And I see nothing, and dream nothing, but Jean. Yet Jean, we must part, before"—

"Before?" echoed Jean sweetly.

With exasperating unconsciousness and absorption she stood on the tips of her toes, and fastened another little knot of berries in his coat. One of her female friends, glancing from a window en dèshabille, remarked laughingly.

"How disgracefully Jean is flirting with that handsome brother-in-law of hers. She's at him again. She won't even wait for the sun to rise. Won't she get a slating when Guy comes back?"

"Finish your speech please, Black. I don't like half and half."

"I can't," he said unsteadily; and took both her hands in his, as they fastened the berries. "I've been thought rather a dab hand at this kind of thing; and quite fancied myself in the rôle. But Jean, you've clean bewitched me. I do a lot of love-making on the stage."

"You don't say so? Well, fancy we're on the stage. How do you love-make?"

"I'll show you, if you come behind the trees. At present, all the windows are watching us. A lady is looking from an upper window; and three housemaids from a lower."

"I'll tell them we are acting a play."

She slipped her hand within his arm, and they turned into a wooded walk together.

"I want to talk of my friend Jenno."

"Hang Jenno. Forgive my rudeness. I want to think of Jean."

"That would be very naughty of you. Remember, you are my husband's brother."

"I remember it to my cost. And am completely handicapped in consequence. I feel desperate."

"O, but you mustn't. It's ever so much nicer to be platonic."

Without waiting for another challenge, Black slipped his arm round her. She nestled her head against his arm. The sun broke ground in blood-red glory, and streamed up the oaken glade, All Earth awaked.

All day Black Arden was a-field, and sportsman-like, forgot all else for the hour, as he blazed away in the covers. But night revealed the two dancing together.

"Black Arden is as good in the dance as he is with the gun," said one man to another. "He's a ripping shot."

"Look at the Beauty." Jean's head appeared almost to rest on Black's arm, as they floated softly on the music.

"Why isn't the sister here? It's charming to see them together. One sets off the other, like two briar roses, eh? By jove though, that's rum. Twin-brothers and twin-sisters, eh? Black ought to marry Mrs Fitz-Alan."

Thus, on the third day, Black had well nigh ceased to struggle. He just drifted. On the morning of that day, they were standing together in the alcove

of the window. Jean said sweetly—

"Will you ride over to Rathmore, and take a message for me to Mrs. Fitz-Alan? I must get her over here. I'll follow, and meet you there. If she is away from home, wait there for me."

"I'd rather shoot, and wait for you here, Jean."

Jean was gazing intently from the window. She saw a snow-white figure, a small dot trotting ahead, cross a distant grassy glade, and enter a wood. She knew it to be Joan, whom she had asked to go nutting that morning.

"I'm not going in for the big shoot to-day," said Black, leaning on the open casement still, and looking down at her. "Let me stay by you?"

"O, my dear boy, I've a thousand things to do. Well, look here, I'll be magnanimous, and meet you half-way. Go and pot a few rabbits, just round here. And I'll meet you in the nut-wood yonder, in half an hour. I'm going nutting."

She smiled softly up into his dark grave face, and ran away.

Black Arden stood a moment in the same attitude. Then glanced at his watch, snatched up his gun, and strode off. His olive-dark face was pale. He was bewitched. He had come to counting the minutes.

SILHOUETTE XII

FANTOCCINI—SHUFFLE THE CARDS.

At the Italian Opera, the house was thronged from base to summit, tier above tier. The *mise en scène* suggestive of fire and brimstone. Blaze of diamonds, which made a sea of light, and voluptuous music. One box in particular appeared to draw the lorgnettes of the whole vast building; for the two exquisite sisters, who sat side by side, similar in dress, form, and feature, were well known to the great London world, seldom as they appeared in it, as the famous beauties of the hour (therefore "celebrities.") Their dazzling fairness was thrown up by the gloom of the background; and by a dark bevy of men, who stood behind them.

Before the curtain rose, Jean had been laughingly whispering first to one of her cavaliers, then another. Evidently, as usual, she was ripe for mischief.

"Don't tell my sister it is Ebon Heiligen," she whispered. "I want to surprise her. She has never heard him."

"O Jean, why did you bring me here to-night? I'd never have come, had I known. Mariano is ill, and some new unknown actor takes his place, who, apparently, hasn't even a name. Who is he?"

"How can I tell?" asked Jean, with a careless laugh. "The House looks as if it were a 'Somebody,' some stupid German, I think."

"Name unknown," said one of Joan's cavaliers gravely, bending obsequiously towards her. "He has never been heard in England; but they say his voice is magnificent."

The curtain drew up. Jean, in accordance with one of her sudden whims, withdrew quite to the back of the box; where though she could command a full view of the stage, leaving Joan sitting alone in front. After a few moments, a perfect and spontaneous storm of applause shook the house. Everybody leaned forward, or rose. There was a perfect ovation. Joan, bewildered, glanced on the stage. She caught up her Lorgnette.

"Why, it is Guy Arden," she said, turning quite pale.

The same devoted cavalier, sitting at Joan's elbow, looked too.

"There is a likeness certainly, a striking likeness; but," he laughed, "it isn't Arden, all the same."

Joan watched the play, spell-bound. Jean, from her covert, watched Joan. There were, apparently, two plays on hand. The great actor, for there could be no longer doubt that he was one—appeared to act for Joan alone—to sing for Joan alone. Joan, after gazing long and steadily through her glasses, leaned back, like one in a dream, whilst that splendid tenor rang through the vast arena, and thrilled her to the very soul. She was thinking of the scene in Braybrooke woods, of the scene with her sister afterwards.

How she heard from Jean that Guy had returned unexpectedly, and left again immediately. And how she had clung to Jean, and wept, apparently without rhyme or reason, in her arms.

Between the scenes, Jean flitted to the front.

"Isn't he splendid," she said. "Who can he be? I must find out presently."

"I believe it is Guy's wraith," said Joan. She was very pale—for her; her eyes heavy, as with unshed tears.

"Why do you keep in the background, Jean? Do come here."

"I've got a headache. If you wouldn't mind, Joan dear, we will leave just before the end, so as to escape the crowd."

Jean had told Black Arden—who had left Braybrooke abruptly—without bidding her farewell, that she would be present, on that first night, with Mrs. Fitz-Alan; and would see him after the opera. So she hurried off to avoid him.

* * * * *

A heavenly October afternoon. The same long strands of gossamer drifting, floating on the air. And the two sisters, Joan and Jean, strolling arm in arm, along the ruddy Rathmore Terrace. They were nearly always dressed alike. No one would have known them apart. They were both in creamy-white, with softly floating skirts, arranged after some fantastic fashion, that showed a touch of saffron with every motion, and with every breeze. Their "lint-white locks" were bare. They still wore, however, the Indian bangles of their babyhood, as a distinctive

badge. Each wore, on the little finger of the left hand, an Indian ring of unusual size and splendour. Joan's was opal (fatal gift) ; Jean's was sapphire. Each sister whimsically waved a huge peacock feather fan.

Jean was in wild, but suppressed spirits. She was expecting Guy momentarily, and knew that he would have met his brother in town. Joan was somewhat emotional; but greatly relieved to hear that Guy was coming home. Every moment, Jean consulted her mimic watch.

"How late he is. What can have happened? Will he never come?"

Joan rallied her, and laughed at her.

"One would think you hadn't met that beloved husband of yours for years. There he comes. But somebody with him."

In another moment, by the turn on the terrace, the four were face to face. Two petrified.

Joan's instinct recognised Guy in a moment, still fully believing him to have been her companion in Braybrooke wood. She shot him one startled, appealing glance, which went straight to his heart. A ray of tropic sunshine, on a block of ice. For the first time, since the fatal day, she met his smile. Black Arden, or Ebon Heiligen, the great actor, had never found himself in a stranger situation on the stage. Guy had never mentioned to him the existence of Joan. He gazed from one sister to the other, electrified. It was a novel sensation. To see the little white witch, who had so suddenly and strangely enthralled him, and cast her potent spell over him in

Braybrooke wood, start into dual life.

Both little white witches gazed upon him. One in mirthful malice. The other in innocent wonder. One laughed. Both waved their mystic fans. All seemed, even to the keen and subtle actor, a maze of pearl and rose, cream and saffron, and dazzling feathers, with grotesquely mocking eyes. The two little blue lakelets of Lucerne had dazzled into four. And all flashed in whimsical sun and laughter.

With a simultaneous gesture, one sister raised her fan to shade her eyes, and gaze below the closer; the other raised her fan, for her eyes to laugh above the brim. It made a charming picture. One never to be forgotten.

"Allow me, Joan, to present to you my brother, Black Arden, alias Ebon Heiligen, the famous actor."

Then, pointing across herself to Joan, with the most bewitching gesture.

"Behold my dear friend, Mrs. Fitz-Alan, alias my twin-sister, Joan."

Guy broke into a kind of wild laugh, half humourous, half reckless, half resigned.

"Black looks all abroad. He doesn't know one from t'other. One's opal, t'other's sapphire. One will have to tie a pink ribbon round her neck, the other blue, or we shall blunder, and Black be kissing his sister's sister. As for me, I warn you," he glanced at Joan, "I quickly lose my heart, and head. Nobody knows anybody. Life's a lottery. Let's shuffle the cards."

* * * *

Aye, Life s a Lottery. One turn of Fortune's wheel, and all is changed. By one laugh the more, one blush the less, one smile or frown the more, one tear the less—the tide is turned. The course and colour of this, our mortal life, shifted and transformed.

A man and woman come together. A man and woman, like the birds of the air, or the beasts of the field, create and rear their progeny

One woman has black eyes, another blue. Yet, if we be told and taught aright, each man and woman has the power of creating and transmitting a soul divine, which is to live, or die, for ages which know no end! A strange beginning to a strange end.

As the great writer and orator, Bishop Gunning, hath it. "The changes and chances of this mortal life." All is chance and change.

Thus these mummers played at chance. Eleanor, in a moment of madness, flung away a pomegranate flower, a soul. Joan, for a wild vagary, cast two lives away.

After desperate and determined courtship from an enthralled lover; after tears and entreaties from a devoted sister, Joan gave herself to Black.

Guy Arden settled £5,000 a year on his brother.

Nature fashioned two sisters after the same model. Both had blue eyes and rose-lips; hair and face like flecks of sunshine. Yet, Jean would have done for Black. She was, just a woman.

Guy and Jean lived at Braybrooke. Black and

Joan lived at Rathmore. Only a few leagues of hillock and heathland lie between. Only, a little life. Only—Forever!

Jean was not Joan for Guy. Nor would be, through all time. Never, the little "old original" Joan, who sat in the old Quad, singing to her baby girl long years ago.

Sometimes he sees and hears her now. The arch, and ivied cloister. The sunlight slanting low. The mossed and antique Quadrangle. And the fountain softly plashing. The little form she clasps, long gone to dust, and the silenced voice still sings:

"There was an old woman
Went up in a basket,
Ninety times as high as the moon.
Where she was going, I couldn't help asking,
For in her hands, she carried a broom."

"Old woman; old woman, old woman,"
Said I,
"Where are you going with your broom
So high?
"I'm going to sweep cobwebs
Off of the sky;
And I'll come back to you,
By and bye."

CURTAIN FALLS.

Alastor Graeme.

WHAT'S GONE OF MENIE?

WHAT'S GONE OF MENIE?

(A TRAGEDY OF THE HOUR)

A Study in the Vulgarity of the Modern Maiden (in twelve Silhouettes).

SILHOUETTE I

THE MODERN MOTHER AND TWO BIKES.—DUAL DIALOGUE.

Mrs. Gamaliel sat down alone to her frugal luncheon, a luncheon which consisted of a dry biscuit, and a glass of thin claret. The table was strewn with dainties, but Mrs. Gamaliel didn't even glance towards them. She sat with her head resting on her hand, while tears of resignation and despondency dimmed her meek eyes. She was a small pale woman, so fragile in appearance, that it seemed as if one vigorous puff from human lips might float her off into space.

She was accustomed to solitude. And to take her breakfast and luncheon alone five days out of the seven. She was not "up to date," in any sense of the word, this poor little modern mother. Her two big strapping daughters (who towered head and shoulders above her), rode over her rough shod; shook her up

as if she were a feather-cushion. She was in a state of chronic mash. Aye, she had been born just a little too late in her generation, a generation which had been an age specially adapted to women-folk of gentle toddle, and behold, as this poor little pilgrim was toddling complacently along, betwixt her cradle and her grave, the rattle and rush on the wave and the wane of the Nineteenth Century overtook her. She was caught up and swept onward, like a straw on a tidal river, only to be left behind, breathless, bruised, and broken.

Everything went at express speed. Action answered thought, as thunder answers lightning. And, in the blinding dust and glare, the chariot-wheels of the reckless charioteers flew past and over her, in one incessant stream, each bound for his bourne and his goal.

"Forward" is the motto of the day and the hour. The race is for the swift. The victory for the strong. Let the slow and the weak go away and pray. Their day is done.

Some such ideas floated, in a vague way, through the mind of the modern mother. She soon, however, wiped away her tears. They hadn't fallen. They went back to the heart from whence they sprang. For there was no-one to "play with and fondle, no-one to love and adore."

Having rung the bell, and received no answer, she took her flower-basket from one of the deserted rooms, and toddled out into the deserted garden. Save for her lorn self, the place, pretty though it was, seemed a place of the dead.

Behind the scenes, the page boy, stretched in a lounging chair, within his master's den, cigar in mouth, and feet on the chimney-piece, devoured the last and raciest novel by Rudyard Kipling. The cook, on an Island of pots and pans, her kitchen maid away on her young master's "bike," had been overtaken by a bottle of stout and slumber; the bottle stood empty, crowned by a rakish cork, beside her. The "smart" parlour-maid, all starch and streamers, with a nut-shell of lace on her waved locks, stood on the border of a wood, and leaned across a stile; whilst her "young man" stood in the road, and leaned across a stile "keeping company."

Mrs. Gamaliel, in a little shabby hat, and a pair of gloves three sizes too big for her, and armed with a pair of gigantic scissors, snipped off the heads of the dead flowers, and collected them in her basket, so that they "shouldn't litter the garden."

The Cottage was all that a cottage should be. A rambling bit of building, all odds and ends, gable-lattice and thatched roof, which lent the last touch to its picturesque charm. Over all, ran the very riot of Spring, in flower, and leaf, and waving tendril where birds went wild with joy. The green garden sloped down on all sides from its cottage-crown, to the woods, and to giant hedges of evergreen, which shut out the road. And a group of low-spreading sycamores shadowed the slope of the lawn. Alongside, and beyond the drive, went winding shrubbery.

The front door bell had been rung twice, in muffled tones, before it was heard by Mrs. Gamaliel, who herself went to answer it. To her great relief, she

saw it was only "dear old Mrs. Macheath," from over the way, one of the toddlers of her youth, who often came to chat with her.

"Alone, as usual," cried the lively old woman. "And where are those great big daughters of yours to-day, my dear? Off "on their bikes" I suppose?"

"Yes, off, on their bikes," echoed the mother resignedly, as they sat down together under the sycamore. "That is, Vix doesn't do it much you know. Menie is the "biker." But everything now-a-day is, metaphorically speaking, "on the bike." There's not even time to breathe."

Mrs. Macheath laughed heartily.

"It seems so absurd even to hear you mention such a term as "bike." The expression is so essentially modern, so eminently "smart." And you, my dear, are just a whiff of pot-pourri. You are doubled up, just like a little crumpled withered rose-leaf, and they have placed you in a china bowl, and set you up on a top shelf, to be quite out of the way. But you've still got your china-bowl."

Mrs. Gamaliel laughed too, somewhat faintly.

"Yes Macky; but it is all cracked and broken, just rivetted together. I was feeling very lonely and depressed, before you came in. Vix is at the tennis club as usual. She simply lives in the tennis-courts. Menie has gone biking somewhere. I don't know if she will be back to-night."

Mrs. Macheath turned up her eyes, and held up her hands on a level with her ears. The attitude expressed more than words.

"Not home, to-night! O, these girls, these girls,

and Menie is so pretty, and so wild. I suppose you have entirely and finally given up chaperonage ? "

" Entirely. The girls have their own cards. I drive and leave mine one way. Menie bikes and leaves hers another. The girls never go out anywhere together, either to dinners or dances. Each chaperones herself."

" That doesn't matter so much for Vix, who is well able to take care of herself. But Menie ? "

" Yes, Menie."

" And her father ? "

" O, he says that every girl should learn to stand alone. And he has taught them to do so. I fear he has taught them a very great deal they should never have known. At least—before they marry," added the mother pathetically.

" Heaven only knows my dear. If an unmarried girl is to leave her father and mother behind her, and play her part in the world, with the perfect liberty and independence of a man, I imagine she ought to have a man's knowledge, if not experience. It is impossible, however, for poor old folks like ourselves, to solve such extraordinary enigmas. I should think an " innocent " girl, in this age, would stand but a poor chance. A girl should now be armed *à l'outrance*, and able and ready to fence with every man she meets."

" Certainly Vix is. Her tongue stabs like a stiletto, as I know to my cost."

" Yes," laughed Mrs. Macheath. " And her father has sharpened it by the constant practice of wit and badinage, till she can't speak without a thrust. The

poor dear Bishop is nowhere. And yet I believe she wishes to impress him," added the old woman slyly. "And that he has some idea of surrendering his diocese and his crozier into her hands. Then Heaven help us all."

Mrs. Gamaliel laughed.

"Vix would keep us all in order. But I must say I would gladly and thankfully have her removed from the cottage to the Palace. We should then at least, be able to call our souls our own."

"I don't know about that; scarcely. Charlotte, you would sacrifice us all?"

"I would sacrifice anything, or anybody, for *peace*.

Meantime, two bikes on the King's highway, riding each at the rate of twelve miles an hour, passed in a whirl of dust.

"Hi, hi, whither away?" And——

"By Jove, is that you? Who would have thought of seeing you at this time of day?" And the steel steeds wheel round simultaneously.

The first speaker was a tall, finely developed girl, with a mop of sunny hair, and a mutinous expression both of mouth and eye. The last speaker was a dark, swarthy, and rather small man, of a dapper commercial type. As the dust cleared, his bold, black eyes ran over his companion with a marked and critical admiration. There was a considerable display of—well—ankle, and the ankles were shapely, and seemed to court attention.

"You are looking uncommonly pretty this morning, Miss Menie. But no doubt you know it?"

"Then why tell me stale news?"

"In spite of the heat, you look as cool and pale as —a cucumber."

"Why not a cabbage? A cucumber is apt to perspire when peeled. It takes a deal to get a rise out of me. And as for a blush, can't do it Billy, at any price. Never blushed in my life."

"I can well believe it," laughed Billy Buckram. "May I come your way?"

"Yes. Why not, my boy? Off you go."

"Whither thou goest, I will go," sung out "my boy." And away they whizzed, lost in a whirl of dust.

In a glade of S. Leonard's forest, they stopped to rest and cool, for they had been chattering as they whirled, for miles. They threw themselves on the grass, Billy to light a pipe, and Menie a cigarette, having previously stopped at a "pub" to get a glass of beer.

"Menie, you're a real good sort. There's no nonsense about you. A fellow can do and say what he likes, without your always pulling him up, or thinking he's in love with you. You're a sweet little pal."

Menie puffed vigorously and somewhat abstractedly at her cigarette.

"O yes Billy. You're quite safe with me. I'll take care of your little moralities, and all the rest of it. I never lead innocent boys astray."

Billy burst out laughing.

"I wish to Heavens you would. Any place would be Heaven to me with Menie Gamaliel."

"Not for long, I promise you. To have a man in

tow would bore me to extinction."

"If I marry a wife, she must be as ugly as sin. If she were pretty, I should be so mad jealous. All the Johnnies are after you Menie, and you don't care a hang for one of 'em."

"It amuses them, and don't hurt me."

"But it hurts them."

"That's their look out. 'Tain't my role to sentimentalize."

Billy rolled a little nearer his pretty companion, beside whom, crouched a magnificent stag-hound, in the attitude of Landseer's lions. Whenever Billy ventured nearer, Gelert showed his teeth in a low and ominous growl. When Gelert was near no man dare touch Menie Gamaliel. And Gelert couldn't bear Buckram. Buckram entertained a corresponding hatred for Gelert. When Gelert growled, Buckram involuntarily started.

Menie laughed, the terrified expression of his countenance was too ludicrous.

"Don't be frightened," said she, "he shan't hurt you. Come, old boy, when are you going to give another hop? What's the good of being rich, and having a "park," if you don't make a splash?"

"The old aunt don't seem to see it somehow. O, wait till I get a wife, Menie, and the old girl will have to trot."

"Rather," laughed Menie, "I'd pity any Mrs. B.B. who had to run in double harness with Aunt Blaze."

"Mrs. B.B. shall never be placed in such a position. Mrs. Billy Buckram"—

Billy dropped his pipe, rolled over, and stared up

with round eyes, sentimentally. Menie puffed on imperturbably. It was a losing game for Billy.

"Darned if I'll ever marry a pretty girl," he broke out at last. "They're all so dashed stuck up. I'd as soon make love to a hedgehog."

"You get nothing but prickles."

"I'll go and make love to Vix. I hate dark girls. Vix is as black as your hat."

"I'm afraid Billy, you're an ass. Vix likes "pals," as I do. As soon as a man remembers he's a man; and a woman remembers she's a woman, it's all up."

"It's doosed hard not to remember it, when, the woman is pretty."

"It's doosed hard not to remember it, when the man's an ass."

"By Jove, Menie."

"Want a light?" said Menie. "Have another pipe?"

Billy followed her advice. He took another whiff to cool.

SILHOUETTE II

ON THE CAUSEWAY—TWO STRINGS—A BISHOP AND A RAKE.

"How do, Bishop?"

And Susannah Gamaliel, alias Vixen or Vix, touched with her finger the brim of her hat, which was pushed off from her heated brow, to the back of her head.

"I've been playing tennis all the afternoon, right on end without a breather. Lulu Fillip and I played Barney and Jem, beat 'em into cocked hats. They hadn't a leg to stand on."

"Well done, Miss Gamaliel, well done. You always contrive to come off victorious, I notice, on whatever side you take."

"And now I'm off across the meadows to cool off by the river, and unearth Aunt Blaze. I see you're on the toddle Bishop too?"

"Quite so. And enchanted at the prospect of a stroll with Miss Susannah."

"Susannah and the elder," thought Vix, casually.

"I can't think why you don't take to the Bike," she said, as they strolled along the causeway.

"My dear girl, Bishops have not come to that. Imagine my costume. It would look absurd; and not the least suitable."

Vix laughed heartily at the picture.

"If a Bishop has good calves, why not?"

His Lordship glanced furtively but complacently down at his legs. They were his strong point.

"Well, well, my rapid days are passed. I was a sad dog in my day, Miss Susannah."

And his Reverence gave a fat chuckle.

"I have not a doubt of it."

And Vix gazed down into his eyes (she was exceedingly tall), and smiled knowingly. There was even the suspicion of a wink in the near eye; which, I regret to say, the bishop returned with interest.

"You are a smart girl, and a clever girl, and I am afraid—a naughty little girl, eh?"

"I like to be up to date," said Vix, swinging her bat, "if that's being naughty? But, I am going to 'fess, sometimes I get sick of it all, and feel quite goody-goody. I think I shall settle down and marry a curate. What do you think?"

"A curate?" echoed the Bishop, horrified. "No, no, Susannah, I hope, something better than that. You would adorn a Palace."

("Go it," thought Vix.)

"Were I a young"—

A bevy of girls, all in sailor hats, blouses, and regulation ties, as if cut out of one block, came round a corner, and stopped to exchange gay greetings. They passed on.

"Yes? You were about to remark?" prompted Vix after a few moment's silence.

"My child, what I was about to remark, would be better discussed in the calm and privacy of the church-meadows. We might be disturbed again."

("Hang it all," thought Vix, "the old boy's nibbled and got off. He won't take it again.")

"And now," said the Bishop with a sigh of deep relief, as they entered the green meadows, and he took off his hat, "I feel happy. How often, Miss Susannah, I've strolled here with my dear departed wife. She was most precious."

("This is getting stale," thought Vix.)

"Aye, she was most precious. Such sweet recollections as these, make me yearn once more for conjugal felicity. As I was saying, were I a young man"—

He had put on his hat again, in a somewhat rakish fashion, and turned his round eyes on his companion.

"I am going to make my confession. But first, Miss Susannah, you must make yours complete. You will not be the first pretty girl I've confessed."

"No, I bet I'm not," laughed Vix.

"You say sometimes you feel "goody-goody?" Now, what sort of a sensation is this?"

"O, it all runs down the spine like cold water, and up again, and gets right up into the roots of my hair, and goes wriggling off somewhere into the clouds. It's a splendid feeling while it lasts, but it's fleeting. I feel it most when the organ plays in the Cathedral, or when you preach," she added audaciously.

Bishop Flounder's sermons were a bye-word for insipidity.

"Dear me, you feel like that? This is most interesting. And have you thoughts and aspirations above your usual daily life?"

"Rather. Sometimes I fancy myself a slummer, or a missionary chopped up by the heathen Chinee (I feel real good then), or a curate, or a bishop."

"Come, come, I have hopes. Do you know, Susannah," and he took her hand in his "I have always thought you, until now, a rather frivolous and rather naughty, little girl?"

"You don't say so? No, Menie's the bad lot, if you like. There have always been 'germs' in me. I'm on the pine. I want to be something I'm not. The Dad's 'cells' don't satisfy me. There's nothing in 'em. It's always grub, grub, grub after the missing link, he never finds, and never will. He never gets any further. We start from a cabbage, and end in nothing. That's his theory. How's that for a Parson? For there are dozens of 'em in your diocese, who think that way. Only they're frauds. Dad isn't."

"Great heavens Miss Susannah; you surprise, you startle me. You don't mean to say your clever father is an unbeliever?"

"Not a bit of it. He's a know-nothinger, an 'enquirer.' He's always 'enquiring,' and never the wiser. That's what beat's me. I live in an atmosphere of unrest and bother and worry and nag. I want to run away from it all, and find peace and *rest*."

"And faith Susannah, and faith."

"Just so. I want to believe in and hang on to something, if its only a bishop. There I've 'fessed. Now for yours?"

They were walking hand in hand. Vix, striding along in her energy, began to swing the Bishop's

hand hard, as though it had been a pump handle, and she wanted to pump out his words and ideas, which came as a rule but slowly. The Bishop, under these circumstances, didn't find it easy to "fess." He stopped short, and taking both the girl's hands in his looked at her hard. It was a fine opportunity for Vix. She dropped her eyelashes, which rested long and black, on the rich coloring of her round cheeks. It was too much for him.

"Susannah," he said solemnly, "were I a young man, I'd ask you to marry me?"

"Young? Of course you're young, very young," said Vix, kicking at a pebble with her foot. "Nobody's old now-a-days, any way."

"It is charming of you to say so. But I am old compared with you, my little Susannah. O! I think you would make a charming Bishop's wife. The doors stand open for you. Will you come?"

Vix seemed to hesitate and think.

"Will you let me have my fling?" she said at last. "I must play tennis, or die. Will you lend me a leash of curates sometimes, when I'm very hard up?"

"I will lend you and give you anything and everything," said the enamoured bishop.

"Then give me time to think. Give me three days?"

"Must I really wait in suspense so long?"

"It's better than being in too much of a hurry," said Vix, with modest virtue.

"And Papa, what will he say?

"He'll jump at it."

"And—and Mrs. Fluff?" (a widow, who was one

of his most devoted admirers).

Vix burst out laughing.

O! Mrs Fluff will *scream*.

"And Susannah, may I hope? Is your heart inclined to me?"

"It's inclined just like that," and Vix poised her bat at an angle of forty-five. "It's touch and go; but I must think. You see it's a responsible position."

"I love and respect you all the more, my love, for your little doubts and waverings. But that you will come to me, and to the fold, I feel convinced. So Susannah, sweet Susannah—"

Susannah gave a jump; he had passed his solid sacerdotal arm round her up-to-date eighteen-inch waist, and proceeded to kiss her.

"O! isn't this premature?" cried Vix, who hated kissing. "Stow that! You've knocked my hat off!"

The Bishop was an ardent lover.

After a prolonged embrace, she escaped, breathless, and fled.

On that same evening, Billy Buckram received a note addressed to him in a hand he knew, with "Send answer back by bearer." He was lounging and smoking in his den; his recumbent form on a couch, his slippered feet on the back of a chair. He read, "Can you meet me on the Causeway to-morrow at ten sharp? Want to ask your advice. Business of importance."

"What the devil does she mean?" he said aloud. Now, if it had been Menie."

"Hulloa!" cried one of the men present.

Billy scribbled on the back of an envelope " without fail," and gave it to the man in waiting.

The following morning, Billy Buckram and Vix Gamaliel met on the Causeway; Vix, striding along at her usual pace, throwing up and catching her cane in the air. Long before they met, she began laughing.

" O ! Billy, what a joke," she shouted. " I must consult you, for you're an old pal of mine, and I think a lot of your opinion."

" What's up, Vix ?"

Vix was a long time before she could speak for laughing.

" You'll never guess. Old Flounder has been and gone and fallen in love with me, and asked me to go shares in the Palace. Isn't that a rise for the family ?"

And she looked him full in the face. Billy Buckram too, looked highly amused.

" And what did you answer ?"

" Nothing. Neither yes nor no. I want to think it over."

" I wouldn't think long, if I were you."

" Why, what would you do ?"

" Act."

" Send the poor old buffer about his business, I suppose," said Vix, with a laugh, and with a coquettish glance from her bright black eyes. O, Billy, your heart's like a flint. He's awful spoons on me."

" So I supposed."

They had reached a shady and secluded bend of

the Causeway, where there was a stile and the churchyard walk. Vix leaned on the stile, so that she could look up into his face, a more effective pose than looking down; and Vix knew that her eyes were her strong point.

"Well, what am I to do? It seems a rum thing, my coming to you; but I never trust a woman, and you know what a rum lot they are at home. You've more *savoir faire* and worldly knowledge than the whole lot put together Billy. The Dad, with all his science, is like a baby, for that."

"Then I am to act father and mother and guardian and friend to you? How about Pete? Wouldn't he be better?"

"Pete's no good. And besides, he's never to be found, and I've only got two days and a half to decide."

"I'm in an awkward predicament. How can I advise a young and pretty girl to cast herself away on an ancient ponderous Flounder? even though it owns an apron and smalls? What the deuce—*I* can't advise."

"You seemed very prompt at first. You said 'act.' What did you mean?"

Billy looked slightly confused for him, for Vix's gaze was very piercing and intense, and never wavered. Then he turned on his bold black orbs, and gave it her with interest.

"Don't stare at me so," she said, looking as if she liked it.

"I mean this, Vix, that you know I admire you, and am very fond of you; but I don't want my

admiration to stand in the way of your interest. It would be a first-rate match, even for you. When you've secured your old fish, you can do what you like with him. You can have high old times. So I say marry him off-hand, and have done with it."

The girl's dark eyes contracted and ignited, in a curious kind of fashion, for one moment her under-lip quivered, but she bit it hard and so kept it well in hand; whilst, with the point of her cane she dug a hole in the gravel at her feet, with a vigour that was vice.

A flash of a smile on the man's countenance was quickly suppressed.

("Rather neat that, I know her lay. No, Miss Vixen, not much.") !

"Is that your final counsel?" asked Vix, still digging furiously.

"My final counsel," said Billy, using the knife freely.

Vix looked up. Billy Buckram began to think he must be mistaken after all; men are so easily humbugged, and women are such frauds. Her black eyes were bright and keen, and her lips a trifle sarcastic, as she said with a laugh,

"Would you have given the same advice to Menie?"

"I would have given the same advice to Menie. Except that it would have been more disinterested. What do I care for Menie?

Vix laughed again, and shouldered her cane.

"Ta ta," she said, and off she strode, her loose coat flapping in the wind.

In another half-hour she was slashing her balls

over the net in a fashion that cut out all the work for her assailants. She was in grand form. Girls now-a-days live hard and go fast. And, even in the old days, were not wont to wear their hearts on their sleeves.

SILHOUETTE III

DORMICE, CELLS AND DAUGHTERS (MISSING LINKS.)

A TRIALOGUE.

For a great wonder, husband, wife, and son had been breakfasting together at the Cottage. Peter Gamaliel, medical student, had turned up on one of his rare visits home; and Father and Son had been firing off volleys at one another the whole morning, arguing and quarrelling on every conceivable question, scientific and philosophical, till poor little Mrs. Gamaliel's head was in a whirl. She could catch but little; and what she did hear, she didn't understand. Both father and son spoke very rapidly. Both father and son possessed the gift of lightning quickness of thought and intuition. Both father and son were blessed with the same supreme egotism, the same superb vanity and self-confidence. Both father and son owned aggressive analytic noses, and cynical mouths, with a quizzical and ironical drag of the off corner, which was almost a distortion. In fact, even if it hadn't been for the high respectability and eminent virtue of Mrs. Gamaliel, there could be no manner of doubt that Peter was the son of Gaudery.

They attacked every problem and every creed under the sun in turn, thrashed them, winnowed them, found them wanting, and tossed them to the four winds of Heaven. They could have done it better themselves. They read, grasped, and though they never originated, grappled the ideas of others with unerring facility; and, either tore them in tatters, or turned them to account. They never agreed on any single subject, save in an everweening belief in their own powers; they clashed, and then— If the old fellow found the argument getting too hot and strong for him, and going too powerfully against him, he shifted his ground, and took refuge in abuse. He'd turn on Pete, and rend and smash him. Then Pete, who, unlike the daughters, had some idea of filial reverence, would hold his tongue, and decamp. And when he was thus clean driven from the field, Gaudery Gamaliel would toss off half a tumbler of whiskey, (whiskey is conducive to meditation), throw himself into his easy chair with his legs up, and his pipe in the curl of his fingers, and think it out. Yes, that wasn't a bad idea of the youngster's after all, Pete was all there. Pete was the sun of Gaudery, and there was the making of a man in him. Pete, though he wanted moulding badly, had a dash of the paternal genius. Then the youngster's idea would be aired and ventilated and chipped and planed and polished, till it wasn't Pete's at all, but Gaudery's. And mighty proud was Gaudery of that idea. In his heart of hearts, he believed himself sincerely to be the greatest unknown genius the world had ever held; and his son Peter was a good second.

Gentle little Mrs. Gamaliel left the table with relief. Her day's work lay before her. First she had to order luncheon and dinner. The girls had tried taking the housekeeping alternate weeks; but somehow, clever and dashing though they were, this didn't seem to answer. Gaudery, little as he cared for the *haut-gout* of the palate, complained that there was "too much monotony;" Vix, bat in hand (she never parted from that bat); or Menie, astride her bike, would sing out "Hi, hi, Cordery, I've forgotten the dinner. Beefsteak and onions? Yes, his Reverence likes that, Beefsteak and onions let it be."

Then, as a parting shot to duty "Hi, Cordery, he likes the beefsteak *rare.*" Mrs. Cordery was quite complacent, "rare beefsteak" didn't require much culinary skill; and she herself was in "delicate health," and "liked her bottle of stout reglar." Even beefsteak and onion, however, are apt to cloy. Mrs. Gamaliel had to take the housekeeping back. It was a fashion that belonged to the toddlers of her youth.

Having given her orders for the day, she made her way to the little drawing-room. How cool and shady it was, how *silent.* A faint delicate odour of rose-leaves pervaded the atmosphere, and the curtains were dropped over the green gloom beyond. Wood doves were cooing in the wood near by. The vision of the old home and the dead mother rose before her. It had been a beautiful old home before they lost their all; and she seemed to feel that mother's arms again around her, in the stately and gracious solitude of that old garden far away. She sat down on the sofa,

and the tears welled to her eyes; but a sudden dread lest she might be surprised, roused her from the luxury of grief and regret. Gaudery couldn't endure the sight of tears. She "wiped them soon"; and went across to the cages, which constituted the second act in the daily drama. Her birds and dormice appeared so delighted to see her—the only living things that did. The birds fluttered against the bars. The dormice were all alive, performing various acrobatic feats, and staring at her with bright shallow eyes, eloquent of cupboard love.

Charlotte Gamaliel had been somewhat upset by the loud and prolonged talk below, through which, though she heard nothing, she had sat with old-fashioned courtesy, anxiously watching the faces of her husband and son. A nervous spasmodic contraction of the delicate features, however, was the only sign left of emotion. She spread her newspapers on the floor, and, going down on her knees, began to clean out the cages of her belovéds; and in so doing, became supremely content.

Pete came in with a rush.

"I say, mother."

"Mother" was sitting on the floor, so engrossed with a brace of dormice, which were running up and down her arm, that she didn't even hear his entrance.

"I say, mother, the Boss and I have been having a row."

"What dear?"

"A row," he repeated, pointing stairward with his thumb. "It's all along of Menie. There's the

devil to pay. It seems that she's been seen wheeling along the road at two o'clock in the morning, with that cad Buckram. And it's rumoured that they'd been benighted, and put up together at some wayside Inn. And Menie didn't come home till morning. All Sandilands is agog. I shall have to challenge Billy, and thrash him."

"O no; pray don't do that," said the mother, sitting down on the sofa with her dormice, and looking quite overcome. "It's as much Menie's fault as his. It's disgraceful; I always tell her so, getting herself so talked about. She calls it being "up to date, and says it's "only old fashioned fogies who talk." She tells me to "dry up." I don't know what will become of her," she added plaintively, caressing a dormouse.

"Nor I either. I'm old fangled enough to think that the way those girls go on is disgraceful. Other fellows' sisters do the same; but that don't make it any better. She'll have to marry him now."

"O Pete, it can't be as bad as that? I can't believe even Menie would have stopped out with him like that? She always assures me she has another girl with her, when she stays away the night."

"The 'other girl' was Buckram this time, and no mistake. She'll lie till she's black in the face."

[Enter Gamaliel, senior, like a whirlwind, slippered, and hair on end.]

"What's all this trumped up story about Menie? The women have been making change out of it, because she's young and pretty, the spiteful old hags! If she did stop out the night, the girl could take care

of herself. I've taught her that. Menie's no fool. And I tell you what, Mr. Pete, I won't have you interfering in my house. I'm master here. And my daughters will take care of themselves, without interference from you."

(Mrs. Gamaliel) "Gaudery, Gaudery."

"That's just what Menie doesn't do," thundered Pete. "She's getting into disgrace all round. Wherever I go, I hear her name coupled with Buckram's. He's just amusing himself at her expense."

(Mrs. Gamaliel) "Pete, Pete, I beseech you—"

"Billy's a rattling good fellow!" thundered Gaudery.

"Billy's a thundering blackguard and cad!" shouted Pete.

"Then go and tell him so to his face."

"You bet I will."

(Mrs. Gamaliel) "O Gaudery—O Pete—"

"I'll kick him in the ribs. I'll smash him into a cocked hat. This comes, sir, of your shutting yourself up, and grubbing after your infernal cells and tadpoles. This comes, Madam, of your passing your time on your knees, crawling after dormice. Meantime, your daughters are clean cut off from you. Your daughters go to the devil."

(Mrs. Gamaliel) "Pete, you are cruel.

Pete had got rampant, and was hitting out all round. Gaudery calmed down in proportion. Mrs. Gamaliel subsided flat on the sofa, feebly kicking her little feet. Gaudery Gamaliel fled.

Pete was a good son, and his wrath was apt to pass

like a thunder-cloud. If it hadn't been for his mother's hysterics, he would have echoed the laughter that he heard explode on the stairs, as the Rev. Gamaliel descended in slippered feet to his whiskey and his "'scope." When his mother had recovered, Pete sat down beside her, with his arm round her, looking like a sorrowful sick monkey, the cynical and quizzical corner of his mouth very much drawn down. She laid her head on his shoulder, and stifled a sob.

"Dear mother, I'm a brute and a bully, and all the rest of it. Don't think anything more about it; and pray forgive your penitent Pete."

"I do Pete; I do. But it is terrible to see strife between father and son. And you know how violent he can be, on such very slight provocation."

"Well, mother, you made a timely diversion anyway. We might have come to blows."

"O Pete, where are the dormice?"

She sat up, looking round, the picture of blank despair.

"I believe one subsided in convulsions on the hearth-rug. There he lies, on the kick."

Mrs. Gamaliel flew to his side.

"Let him be," said Pete. "But place a cushion under his head, and a piece of leather between his teeth. He's 'epileptic.' I always told you so."

"O, how heartless you are." Mrs. Gamaliel was on her knees beside her darling. "Is there no cure?"

"Nothing, but softening of the brain, or death. Death eventually, would be a happy release."

And Pete began to tease the other dormouse behind his mother's back, and drive it frantic. At that moment the smart parlourmaid, starched and streamered, entered with a silver salver and a note, and a smile for Pete. The note was graciously presented to her mistress, who, in a most undignified attitude on the floor, read with many spasmodic twitches of the nose and mouth, a few words in Mrs Macheath's handwriting.

"Your daughter Susannah is happily engaged to be married to the Bishop of Sandilands. Allow me to congratulate you."

[Enter Gaudery Gamaliel, on slippered stride, triumphant.]

"Now, Sir, what have you got to say for yourself? If Vix has gone to the devil, it's in the bishop's company."

The smart parlourmaid on the threshold, turned backward ear, to listen.

Pete burst into a shout of laughter.

"Well done, old Vix. May the Lord have mercy on the Bishop."

SILHOUETTE IV

THE RISEN GIRL—ELIGIBLE AND DETRIMENTAL.

A fashionable mob was gathered in the Palace Gardens of Sandilands, of which Susannah Gamaliel was so soon to be the chosen mistress. The Bishop was swelling about, carrying his waistcoat before him, with supreme content. Vix, all in virgin white from head to foot, looked quite charming with the love-light in her eye, and acted to perfection the rôle of modest and demure. As Melpomene Gamaliel (" Menie ") was not present—the two sisters were never seen together—Lulu Fillip bore off the palm of beauty. She was a big, tall girl, somewhat of the Menie type; fair, and inclining to be fat, though the luxuriously modelled bust and waist were decorously compressed and gathered, by the united efforts of a devoted mother and two maids, into an eighteen-inch zone; yet Nature contrived to escape, to bulge out, and flow away below, in grand curves that a sculptor would have loved to model (only, he would have wept over the waste).

Although Lulu Fillip was as famous in the tournament as she was on the links, she didn't intend play that day, unless of a different kind. Lulu was in war-paint; corset, blush and heels, all complete. She was accompanied by a huge button-hole, which

proved on closer inspection to be a very small dandy-brother, unbraced and disjointed, who looked as if he needed the glue-pot to hold him together ; wherever his sister was trim and tight, he was loose ; his long tie fluttered in the wind ; from his round back and sloping shoulders, depended his long, unbuttoned coat, the skirts of which flapped artlessly around him ; his trousers were rolled high over his delicate ankles, and little patent leather shoes. His expression was quite infantile (yet that wretched Pete Gamaliel had been wont to call him the " loose fish)." The same might be said of his sister Lulu ; she appeared so demure, escorting the little brother ; and yet, many a man who had sat out a dance with her, on staircase or in garden-bower, when her robe was cut fore and aft, could have told a piquante tale. Lightning was not the word for Lulu. Because there is motion so rapid, that it appears stationary and slumbrous, like the rapids of Niagara. Only the after-foam of the whirlpool will evince how they go.

As Lulu Fillip sauntered through the lists, cane in hand ; her head well up, and glance which comprehensively scanned and quizzed every group, her small brother prattling beside her, all eyes turned and followed her, for she was well known in the Sanctuary of the Close, as elsewhere. Billy Buckram soon drifted in her wake. Lulu was his style and his " sort " altogether.

" Well met little Billee. This is about the stupidest old show I ever did see, as the Yankee girl said. Do look at Vix Gamaliel, all in vestal white !

She's a caution for snakes. And do look at our Flounder. He is just wobbling."

"With love?"

"With love and pride. What he can see in Vix Gamaliel beats me. Pete says her legs are like walking-sticks, and her feet like packing-cases," added Lulu with a laugh. "She has no figure really."

"She's a fine block of a girl anyway," said Billy, "she takes it out in height and breadth. There's bone in Vix."

"Ye niver spake a thruer word," laughed Lulu. "She's grit; but she's bony. By the bye, what's gone of Menie?"

"Am I Menie's keeper?"

"You're supposed to be fond of her. There's no doubt about that. And who wouldn't be fond of Menie Gamaliel? I love her as much as I loathe Vix. By the way, didn't you have a row with Pete Gamaliel t'other day?" and Lulu looked straight down into his eyes, with a flicker of a smile.

"A row?" asked Billy rather feebly.

"Aye; was it bluff or was it blow? One hears all sorts of funny stories from the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. Did he drive you off the field?"

Billy Buckram reddened visibly.

"I suppose they've talked some confounded rot. They said I put up at a pub with Menie, the night. It's a lie."

"And Pete didn't believe it was a lie," laughed Lulu, "and so he made for you? Come Billy, I'll go evens either way, as to who won?"

"I should say it was about an even draw," said Billy with dignity. "He has at least satisfied himself that his sister's honor is upheld. He made a cussed fool of himself, I know that"

"But he bluffed you, eh? all the same? Ha, ha, ha."

"I believe I treated him with the contempt he deserved"

Lulu laughed loud and long.

"Do depress your chin, at least the eighth of an inch; the old ladies are looking and murmuring prayers for you, they think you some harmless lunatic, who yet should not be allowed to be at large. In fact, the challenge was given, the duel fought, and no blood spilt, that's evident. And Menie's honor is redeemed."

"Menie's honor, as you call it, was never at stake."

"Of course not. Would Menie stake her honor on a bike? or risk it on a Bill? Some folks think Menie's a fool. I think, she's all there."

"There's no doubt about that," said Billy tartly, "and so are you."

"You flatter me," laughed Lulu mockingly. "Come old chap, don't let's quarrel. We can't afford it. Eyes right, and to the left about wheel, march. Fil Floss is bearing down on us, with her nose glowing rosier than ever through the border of her white veil."

But they were too late; by a series of little bounds, even as one kitten pounces playfully on another, Lulu was caught.

"My sweet, my lovely Lulu. Whither, and from

whom, are you flying? Are you not rejoiced at the news?"

"What news?"

"Why my dear, our bishop of course."

"Speak for yourself Fil, he's not my bishop. And I'm afraid he isn't yours now, nor even his own."

"Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha."

The laugh of the charming widow was a peculiar little gamut of her own, and distinctly musical and unique; it began soft and low, but rose in the scale of pianissimo, the final little "Ha" was a *chef d'oeuvre*, and died dulcetly on the ear.

"She will certainly keep him in order. Do you know Lulu I an quite disappointed in him; I did think he was so devoted to the 'dear departed.'" She was 'most precious' you know, 'most precious,' mimicking the bishop, "and I don't approve of second marriages Lulu, I can't abide them."

"O Fil, you are an outrageous flirt then. I thought it was just the other way on; and that you were yearning for "something to love and to fondle, someone to love and adore," and Lulu, singing the refrain, made as if she were dandling a baby.

"Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha. O Lulu, you naughty, *naughty* Lulu. How dare you?" and off she ran.

"Isn't that how you feel?" asked Billy tenderly. Don't you want "someone to love and adore, Loo?" (The brother had tottered off in the wake of Mrs. Floss.) "If so, I'm your man."

"Take care I don't take you at your word Billy; or, make you pay for damages. How about Aunt Blaze? How about settlements?"

"That's good."

"How about Melpomene?"

"Deuce take Melpomene."

"Well, I'll think it over. Look out. I thought I heard somebody in that bush. Will you take your arm away? And will you leave me an inch of room on this seat? You're squeezing me to death, O?"

"Then you shouldn't be so attractive."

Two ladies behind the bush heard the exclamation.

"There is that dreadful Fillip girl," said one. "What atrocious style. Did you hear?"

"I couldn't fail to do so; nor to recognise the voice of the man."

"If she imagines she will secure a husband after that fashion, she will find her mistake. She is quite one degree worse than the Gamaliel girls."

"Pray come away!"

The bush shook; and off they hurried, to spread the scandal.

Half an hour later, Lulu Fillip was sitting enshrined in a rose-arbour, far from the crowd, with Pete Gamaliel. His arm was round her waist. He no longer looked like a sick monkey embracing his mother; but like a spooney monkey, embracing his girl. He was quite in love with Lulu; but she hadn't a penny, neither had he. Meantime, it was very nice to listen to distant music, and sit cooing in a cool arbour, with the spring birds and butterflies showing them how to play.

"By George, I wish I'd got Buckram's gold. You shouldn't be Lulu Fillip long."

"By George, I wish I'd got Gamaliel brass. Vix should never have carried off old square-toes. I'd have flung myself before 'em first."

"You don't mean to intimate you'd have married Flounder?"

"Wouldn't I just? And wouldn't I have trotted him around? And wouldn't I have made (platonic) love to Pete Gamaliel between times? O Pete, we'd have had a high old time."

"Well, thank heaven you are not Mrs. Flounder. I like you best as you are. May you never be saying the same of Billy Buckram. If you were Buckram's wife, I'd cut you, there."

"What a blow! Well Pete, by George, I've often thought of it; and should probably have landed him before now, if it hadn't been for Menie."

"Hadn't been for Menie? What do you mean?"

"Menie's hit him hard."

"Please don't couple his name with Menie's. I've had enough of that. I've stopped that little game," said Pete magnificently.

"O have you?" asked Lulu naively. "Brave boy, You bluffed him?"

"Bluff was sufficient for Billy to show a clean pair of heels."

"O it's all bluff now-a-days," laughed Lulu. "Pete, I'll tell you what. If Menie doesn't mean going, it's time it stopped. She'd make Billy hate her, and then, from what I've heard, he's not the best of foes. She'd have to beware."

Pete Gamaliel laughed a scornful laugh; (he recalled those words in after days).

"At all events she's got a brother to protect her," said he.

The wood-doves cooed, and the butterflies fooled around. And what handsome Lulu saw in ugly Pete, who can tell? In nineteen love-cases out of every twenty, it's just circumstance or chance. That man would have been just as happy with another woman. That woman would have been just as happy with another man. But these two had met in idleness, and were well content. The big foolish bluebottles buzzed about, or sunned themselves on the wall. One in particular, bent on his ablutions, alighted under Lulu's sight, and rubbed his loose head nearly off, in his efforts to get clean, washing his hands jovially between whiles. Summer and Courtship were at hand.

"O, isn't he awfully human? Do get him away."

Pete laughed, and stretched forth a lazy hand. "Only we don't take so much trouble to keep ourselves clean."

"O, if life could be all like this, roses and honeysuckles and dreams."

"And bluebottles and earwigs."

"And strawberries and creams; then we could hang up our hats. Our foolish forefathers in Eden would be nothing to us. We've gorged the coveted apple, and found it wanting. We only want to lie down in peace.

"But alas Lulu, where's the rhino?"

"Haven't you got a rich old uncle or aunt hanging around?"

"No such luck. And if I had, they'd outlast me,

or chuck me at the last. I know 'em well. What's a Johnny to do on two hundred pounds a year ?"

" Is that all you make ? Why I get that for pin money."

" Happy you. I shall get a rise soon. And Lulu, my head's screwed on the right way."

" So you think."

" Will you wait, Lulu ?" and he took her hands in his.

" You'll have to be precious quick then. When's the ' rise ' coming ?"

" In a year, at most, I hope to lay myself and my possessions at the patent leather shoes of Lulu Fillip. Will you spurn or caress ?"

" Depends on the salary Pete. Or, if another Johnny turns up meantime. You're not a bad old sort ; and I wish you hadn't come my way."

" That sounds hopeful, Loo. Why ?"

" 'Cos you've bothered me. My man must be rich, and you're poor. I'd like to wipe you out of creation, Pete. You're a nuisance."

" Loo, you love me."

" Do let my hands go, and sit up like a Christian ; I got these gloves half a size too small, and you've bust 'em. I'm not going to be trapped into admitting anything. Now run away and play."

SILHOUETTE V

SOLILOQUY—SPRING—FOOLING IN A PRIMROSE LANE.

The casement was open; and hung round with creepers of the wisteria and roses and myrtle and evergreen honeysuckle, all in a maze; the dark leaves subtly studding and throwing into relief, the high lights of Spring; wild tendrils, untwined, fresh from Nature's hand, redolent of dew and dawn, dripping from the flash of the shower, and swinging wantonly on the perfumed wind. Now and again would come a sudden drenching rush of drip, as the breezy gust swept and shook the greenwood copse and brake, for very riot of joy, then died away. And only the sighing refrain of the whispering breeze, answered low and long. Up in the deeps, one sweep of blue profound. Swallows flashed white breasts, or hung for a second motionless, in very ecstasy of life and rapture, only to swoop and swirl on the swirling wind. Over gloom on gloom of forest far away, rain rushed in streaking shadows from the cloud. While, deep on cloud and forest, was drawn Heaven's Bow, ever brightening on the gloom, ever paling on the silver-blue; with arc on arc beyond; radiant ghosts—fading into void and mist.

The picture for the rose-hung casement, was a

pretty girl; who, according to modern and evolutionary ideas, was nothing more; but just a superior kind of butterfly, with a startling depth of eye, considering it was born on a rose-petal, to live but an hour, and be blotted out for ever.

The "pretty girl" had big grey eyes, and a fluff of sunny hair; and she had just got out of bed to look on the morning.

Soliloquy. "Was there ever anything like you, Spring? I love you and you love me, because we are both young; and life (and love) lie before us. Dismal old green woods; I hate you; because you hide him from me. He is over there, straight there," and she pointed, with a laugh, "and he is thinking of me, and I of him. I used, I remember, in some remote age, to think there was a Heaven; and now they teach there's none. Yet, against science, against logic, against everything, I believe their is one. What would be the good of a little ephemeral passion, if it couldn't change to love and Faith, and live for ever? If it were not so, I am no more, as the old Dad declares, than that caterpiller, or the bird singing on the bough? A woman is said to have "instinct," which, I take it, embraces intellect, mind, perception, intuition, if not reason and judgment. Then my instinct says I am something better than all these, and I shall live and love for ever. So much for you, old Greybeards. But be I microbe, or germ, or vegetable, or animal, or human, or divine, I am neither progressing nor developing into anything higher or better, that I'll swear. Quite the contrary. Science has

done great things, and doubtless will do greater; but what is to become of us, poor little nonentities, who run to and fro on the face of the earth, on bikes? When I was twelve, I was a good girl. I was decent, and had a certain amount of self-respect. Why have I come not to care what I say and what I do? "He" doesn't like it. The coarser and grosser the insinuation, the louder I laugh. Why have I come to let men talk to me as they do? It's fashion, all fashion, just the fashion of a day. The other day, I saw such a sight on the road, a stout woman, I should think fifty if a day, with her hair cut short, a red face, and big brawny legs in knicker breeches, and stockings with a huge check over them; and she was talking slang, and something worse, to two men, who were on bikes like herself; and who were evidently well amused. All at once I felt a kind of horror of my sex and of my century. Shall I be like that, twenty, thirty years hence? May I lie dead first. Yet maybe, such habits will have become so inherent in me; second nature, growing with my growth, that I shan't see that what is just sufferable in a girl, becomes odious in an older woman. My glass will fail to tell me that I am growing redder and coarser and more vulgar, ever day. And then I go and do the same thing all over again; talk the same things, and think the same thoughts; and let the men say coarse, horrible things, and look at each other; and am dubbed, as my crowning reward, a "woman of the world." Men never marry now-a-days, unless to mend their fortunes. They know too much (and so do girls). There it is.

Sex is annihilated. Everything, every subject, that used to be held sacred, every delicate thought and feeling, are swept away, and jeered at and scouted. The man turns into a woman, and the woman into a man. The very essence and aroma of love are destroyed. Not quite, not quite, I'm never quite the same with *him*. Then the old Menie comes back, the Menie, who used to be kind to her mother, the Menie who used to listen to the nightingales, and dream dreams in the summer-nights, so long ago, and have visions of spirits and angels. Superstitious and fanciful, that Menie may have been ; but O, she was good and pure, compared with Menie of the bike. Perhaps that is what has done it, after all. And always being with men alone, and discussing everything under the sun ; and trying to outvie all the others, even Lulu and the men. Thank Heaven my love has never heard and seen me then, nor ever will. But, away from him, I must go on just the same, as the drinker goes to his drink. I can't help it. And if I turned modest and goody now, O, wouldn't they laugh ? They'd say " Menie's in love." No I'll be Menie of the Bike, so long as my name is Gamaliel. *Ride si sapis.* Hooray ! Hooray !"

The picture-frame was empty. The deep grey eyes of the terribly intelligent butterfly had vanished, leaving the tendrils swinging vigorously. Menie was off, as she would have expressed it, " on the gad."

Across the road, was a pretty primrose-lane, overhung by forest trees, which kissed and interlaced ; and then, throwing up rugged arms, let sunshine filter down in waving weaving mesh of gold, trans-

lucent as running water. Ivy-banks rose high on either hand, starred with primroses of palest gold. No violets were seen, only their subtle breath poured out and steeped the air with fragrance.

In this ideal lane, a Lover was waiting for his Lass. A very handsome lover indeed, in blue velvet coat and knickerbockers, which, though rather a startling costume for this prosaic Nineteenth Century, contrasted well with his fair, beardless face, and little curled and waxed moustache. The face was really beautiful, as much so in expression as in feature; but men and women of angelic mien are not always angels, as many a record proves. He was getting very impatient. This was evidently a tryst. He had not, however, taken many turns, when a girl broke through a hazel hedge, neck and neck with a magnificent staghound, which she led by a leathern leash, and held a short handled lash, for she didn't want Gelert to go hunting (like herself), nor to make for the calves of her lover's legs.

Gelert was a right royal hound; his curled coat shone silver in the sunshine, and his eyes gleamed out from their silver fringe like two dark deep jewels, with their peculiar dog expression of loyalty and woe. The girl had on a short blue serge skirt and coat, and a little blue Tam-o'shanter stuck jauntily on her sunny locks; her face was pale; her eyes like two green stars for they were so large and crystal-clear that they caught the lights of all the sylvan greenery. Those eyes and mouth meant mutiny.

It was Menie Gamaliel, and her inseparable comrade Gelert, stag-hound.

"At last," cried the lover, meeting with outstretched hands.

"At last, Jemmy?" she asked innocently. "Why how long have you been here?"

"A century by my heart; but it's been tickin' so hard and fast, don't you know, I couldn't keep count."

"Poor heart," said Menie, as they strolled along. "Be quiet, Gelert"—the white tail of a rabbit vanished over the bank into a bosky dell—"I believe I was moralizing, Jemmy, rare thing for me. Moralizing and meditation. Can you fancy it?"

"'Maiden med, fancy free,' and all that kind o' thing," said Jemmy tenderly, but laughing too. "No Menie, I can't fancy it at all. Tell me," he asked, looking hard at her, as he generally did, "who were you dreamin' about?"

"Who? and why not what?

"Great Scot, Menie, there's no room for 'whats' in your little life; they're all 'whos.' But whose the 'who'—who—"

"You're not my confessor, Jem. And please don't stare quite so hard. Allow me a moment's grace. (Quiet, Gelert.)!"

"How long are you going to struggle with that big brute? He'll have your arms off soon. I won't offer to take him, as he mightn't fancy it."

"No, he doesn't like blue velvet; he prefers blue serge. O, Gelert's very partial to Jemmy Macaroni."

"The Lord preserve us."

Especially his calves. But he can't abide Billy Buckram."

"Well done he."

"And what's more, Billy's in a mortal funk of him."

"Can't have a better chaperon, Menie. Stick to Gelert."

"I do. Yes, Jem, I was meditating this morning on the error of my ways. You've never seen me at home. In fact, I never am at home. I am a bad wicked daughter."

"You'd make a sweet, pretty wife, darling."

"Don't 'darling' me please; you have no possible right to do so."

"But I want the right, Menie. I'm pining for it."

"Hush. As sure as you make for me, Gelert will make for you. Yes, as sure as your name is Jemmy Macaroni."

"He may make me into mincemeat, if he'll only lay it at your feet.

"Jemmy, I'm a bad daughter. But I don't think, between you and me and the bed-post, as our Grannys said, that my parents are the best bringers up of youth, in the way it should go. We've had to put ourselves in our own ways, specially Pete, poor old Pete. My parents are like Adam and Eve; "Adam delved, and Eve span," whatever that may mean, but nothing came of it."

"We'll hope Eve span herself a gown."

"She'd be none the better for that, Jem. No, we gain nothing from Dad's delving, only, as Vix says, a "good old stink." As for the "span," it's dormice. What can you do with a dormouse I ask you? I rather like the poor little mother; she's not a bad little sort; but she should be labelled "blank."

Jemmy looked away, somewhat abashed.

"She's not up to date. She's slow, Jemmy, *slow*. A tortoise would beat the little mother hollow."

Jemmed laughed, and echoed,

"Poor little mother. Where was she riz? She comes of a good old lot, doesn't she?"

"Very 'good,' and very 'old.' The Jewish shield of the Gamaliels, for we come from the Jews, is, I regret to say, represented by a field blank, with not even a bar sinister to break the monotony; we Gamaliels are eminently 'respectable middle class'; but my mammy, who rejoiced in the name of Swillington, Renebald de Catherlough, bears a billion quarterings on her scutcheon, in which figure largely as supporters a midge passant and a gadfly rampant, the gadfly terribly rampant, pawing the air on his hind-legs. Vix represents the gadfly, and the mother the midge."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Jemmy, the lane resounding with his laughter, as he twirled and tightened his little moustache.

"I take after the Dad. Vix inherits her feet and her rampants from the Hidalgos. She has in her, I fancy, a thin and slightly watered strain of blue blood purpled by the Grusaders. Can't you picture Vix's feet crossed on a tomb? They are so long and so flat."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Jemmy Macaroni. "I'm afraid you're a vicious unnatural little sister. But, as I was saying, Menie, you'd make a rattlin' little wife."

"O Jem."

" Hear me, hear me this once, Menie. Can't you and I run in double harness? It would be rare goin'."

" I should just think it would. Where's the needful to come from, Jem ? It costs something to keep me in ties and clean linen, to say nothing of the ' purple ' and the ' fine.' "

And she glanced at his white jewelled hands, which he was waving freely.

" O, there's my old uncle, the Marquis of Quartering, he is awful fond of you, Menie. He'd stump up like blazes."

" O, the old boy who keeps you in blue velvets and rings and ponies and bells, and all your little trappings. But Jemmy, you wouldn't like to be pensioned like that all your little life."

" Wouldn't I just ?" said Jemmy naively. "That's just what I do want."

" You carry a fortune on your person," laughed Menie.

" Yes, and an infernal nuisance it is sometimes. What's a Johnny to do when he's chased ? Some brute beasts ran me in the other night, in Buckram park. I made for a tree, and there I was the best part of an hour."

This time the lane rang with Menie's laughter.

" Poor, dear Jemmy. And then poor old Quartering had to give a noo soot. I wish I had a fairy godfather."

" Menie, he shall be yours too. He's just wadin' in mines and nuggets ; he don't know which way to turn for 'em. By Gad, if I were only the 'eldest son."

Walter gets it all, the beggar, the titles and that ; but I come in for a lot of nuggets."

" Good ; no wonder you don't work. But how is it he doesn't give you more now ? '

" Jealousy, Menie, jealousy. He keeps me in clothes and that's about all. But if we marry —"

" My dear boy, I wouldn't like to trust him. He'd think Jemmy Macaroni should do better than marry a poor Scientists' daughter."

" He worships you ; he always says " There goes that girl Melpomene on her " bike." By Jove, she's a ripper. What"—

" Well, what ?"

Jemmy tried hard to blush.

" Well, if you will have it, Menie, " what ankles ; what a figure. What are you boys thinkin' of?" he says, " I wish I was forty years younger."

Menie laughed.

" So Menie might be Marchioness of Quartering. Hi, hi, is that the way the wind blows ? I'll go for a spin, and unearth him."

" No good, Menie. He's all liver and chalk. O, what a rare little wife and mother you'd make. Don't you love babies ?" asked Jemmy.

" Babies ?" echoed Menie, with a shudder, as she lashed the young spring leaves with her whip, and brought them down in slashed showers ; " I'd as soon handle callow birds. Were I ever so unhappy as to possess one, I'd roll it up and strap it on the bike behind me, and let it take its chance. Anyway, it would learn from infancy to go fast."

Menie was idling with three flowerets, a primose, a violet, and a periwinkle."

" How piquante and pretty you are, Menie. I'm gettin' desperate for a straight answer. How I wish I was the sunshine, jumpin' all about your waistcoat." Hang that sun, what an impudent beggar it is. Menie—"

" What an arch-coquette a violet is," said she, " hiding away in the green ; and then, with its sweetness, challenging every passer-by to find it and pick it. I think it's a little beast, and a fraud."

" So do I," said he. " I much prefer the buff primrose, with its innocent wide eye. Give me those flowers Menie. The buff primrose shall be " yes." And I'll go and tackle old Quartering right away."

" The buff primrose shall be " yes " said she ; " the violet " yes or no ; " and the periwinkle " no."

He streched out an eager hand ; she looked him straight between the eyes, and with the sweetest, most luring smile, which showed all her teeth and dimples, and almost laid the lashes on her cheeks with laughter, proffered him the violet, the " arch coquette."

" O hang it," said Jemmy, half humorously, half miserably.

" Go and work dear boy, go and work," cried Menie ; " tuck up your petticoats, and forget your golden spoon. And we'll think it over. Day's young yet. Ta, ta."

Menie loitered in the lane, till the last sound of the tinkling silver bells which adorned Jemmy's ponies, died away, a laugh still upon her lips. She stood in

a dream, the laugh faded into thought, the big tears brimmed to her eyes, yet her lips trembled with a happy smile. Her dreams took the hues and the gist of the rainbow, the dazzle of the sun and the shower.

SILHOUETTE VI

TWO PASSIONS AND A BOAT—LOCH LONE.

Little Mrs. Gamaliel's high-sounding ancestry had at least secured for her one small plot of ground in "auld Reekie"; and a mild annuity she could call her own. Thither she and the girls, or more often she and Menie, and sometimes Pete, would repair every summer. It was Charlotte Gamaliel's Retreat, her Sanctuary, for Gaudery never favored it with his presence; he said he'd sooner live in the desert of Sahara; he preferred to live *en garçon* at the Cottage, with his own peculiar cronies round him.

Roslin was a little gem in its way; a picturesque houselet or cottage, set in the heart of the lonely hills and moors, on the borders of a grey and silent lake, which was aptly named Loch Lone. The few acres of Roslin were well wooded, and rejoiced in foaming tumbling burns, which cast up their snow-wreaths as they swirled into torrent and tumult, over the stones through the darkening woods. The lilt of running water; the thunder of the baby-falls; the dusk and serried ranks of old Scotch-firs; the low-driving mist and cloud, eternally caught by the eternal hills; the splash of sunshine, and the constant shower; the solemn heads of the mimic mountains; and, above all, the silence and stillness of the lonely

lakelet, made up a wild and graceful solitude, charming from its isolation. There was only one house in ken, on the very border of the lake, where lived a widow-lady and her daughter, a girl in her teens, like Menie; and these, with a few scattered keeper's cottages, formed the "neighbourhood." This year, Mrs. Gamaliel was accompained by both her girls; for Vix, whose nervous system was wont, like her mother, to get over-wrought, had been ordered thence by the doctor; and, as it was Menie's year for Roslin, Menie wouldn't give it up, even though it had to be shared with Vix. Certainly there was no love lost between the sisters.

A week after their arrival at Roslin, Vix, after a solitary fishing expedition on the Loch, returned in high feather; as she passed an ancient mirror in the hall, an oval mirror, with a cracked and dilapidated frame, she glanced over her shoulder within it; her cheeks were bright with excitement, her dark eyes gleamed. A wood-fire was blazing in the dining-room, and her little mother sat engrossed in the last lament of the "modern woman," horrified yet fascinated, and toasting her toes before the fire. Charlotte, feeling guilty, hid her book away, as her daughter entered.

"Hi, hi, Mops," they always called their mother "Mops," "Tea? No thanks. I prefer a w. and s. I'm wet through, and got enough fish to last a week. I've got a bit of news for you" and she tossed aside her sailor-hat, with a look of suppressed excitement.

"What?" asked her mother, all intent.

"Why the cottage by the wayside, you know it?

on the road to Walcar, is rented for the fishing to a bachelor, no less a bachelor than Billy Buckram. Isn't it rum ?"

" Why of course we know what he has come for ?" cried the mother rather excitedly. " He is after Menie. I am perfectly sure he will never rest till he gets her consent. Only Pete is so absurdly prejudiced. Your father would never allow either of you to marry a man without money ; he has said so again and again. Menie knows it too. She can't do better than accept Billy Buckram."

" My dear Mops, what rot you do talk. Billy's no more in love with Menie than he is with that poker. He flirts with her, yes, so does everybody who comes along. No, he's not come for Menie." And again involuntarily, she glanced at the mirror. " Menie will have to look out elsewhere," she laughed, " Billy's just making game of her. And, she *is* such a fool. I just met him." And whistling with noisy glee, Vix strode to the sideboard to mix her whiskey and soda, for she never wasted much time on her mother.

" Vix, go and change your wet clothes directly, and take the whiskey hot. And please don't make quite so much noise ; you distract me. Have you written to the Bishop ?"

" Don't nag, Mops," said Vix.

(Door bangs.)

The day before they left S. Leonard's Forest, Billy Buckram had seen Menie and young Macaroni sitting out a dance. He was in search of Menie, and came upon them unexpectedly. He was about to ask the girl for a dance ; but instead of that, stepped quickly

back behind the palms, and retreated. He stood for a few moments on the threshold, gnawing his lip. Then he went back to the ball-room and stared at the revolving dancers, without seeing them. Then to the supper-room, where he asked for some brandy, and tossed off a bumper neat. Then called for his horse, and was seen no more.

"Did you see Billy?" asked one man of the other.

"He means mischief. What's come to him?"

"The Lord knows. He's a sulky devil, anyway."

The more Menie Gamaliel flouted him, the more feverishly he pursued her, as is the manner of men. While he stood beside her, and held her fan, she gave him her white shoulder, and her smile for the man on the other side. Menie had wrought him into a tropical condition. There was no help for it. His bad angel led him to follow in her steps to Roslin. He couldn't keep away. He even began to entertain vague notions, if it came to the worst, of surrendering his liberty and his £5,000 a year into a woman's hands. He wouldn't though, if he could help it.

The next day, after their meeting, Vix found Billy Buckram haunting the road outside their gate, and asked him to go fishing.

"I can't," he said, "I'm going with another fellow to-day."

Billy Buckram never left that road; it was a dark winding road, high above the waters of the lake, with precipitous woods descending on either hand, to the music of hidden torrents, far down in leafy glens. The silver-blue of the loch gleamed out through the

sombre thicket, and mist-wreathed Ben Eric held prisoner one mighty cloud, from which rain descended in filmy streams.

Later on, Vix, in her descent through the woods, to the boat house on the beach, heard voices clear on the loch, though very far away. She had a little telescope with her, with which she swept the winding waters, herself screened by trees; anyway, she was too far off and too high up, to be seen by the naked eye. There was a minute boat, coasting close under the rocks, and in it sat Billy Buckram and the "other fellow," all in blue, Tam-o-Shanter included. The "other fellow" was Menie.

Vix gripped a branch near her, and leaned back against the tree. Her black eyes had got in each a jet of flame, which sprang straight from the heart, and flickered stormily; while her teeth, seen through the thin red line of lip, were clenched. "Beast," she muttered through them; "*Beast*,"

She caught off her scarlet fisher cap; it seemed to suffocate her, and drove her fingers through her rough black curls, till they stood on end above her brow. She looked like a young Fury. If ever there was murder in woman's heart, there was murder then in hers. Luckily for her, neither Menie nor stiletto were at hand, or it might have gone badly with the former.

Vix Gamaliel sat on the bough above the cool waters, in the mossy gloom, with the shower falling on her bare head, till she cooled. Then she went home, the same nonchalant Vix as ever.

Menie was not home till late.

"You've been with Billy?" challenged her sister, staring full at her.

Menie tossed her head and laughed.

"Why not, pray? Billy comes here to amuse me. I fished, and he rowed. That's what Billys are made for."

Susannah's eyes told tales; but she shut her lips tight. Then—

"You're a horrid flirt. As sure as my name's Vix Gamaliel, you'll come to some bad end. You think the men are all cracked about you, and you can get any one of 'em, by holding up a finger, when all the time they're all making game of you, every one. Billy told me as much. 'Menie on her bike' is the laughing-stock of the county."

"And Vix on her Bishop is another."

"Hush girls, hush," said the mother, who overheard. "Do pray be more prudent, Menie. If you and Billy Buckram really care"—

"I'd sooner marry a badger," cried Menie, "or—Jemmy Macaroni."

"That will never be allowed, my dear; he has no money. There is some truth in what Vix says. You are talked about."

Wild tears blurred everything for Menie; with hands to her ears, she rushed from the room.

"She's mad," said Vix coolly.

Very pale, but with red eyelids, Menie sauntered into her sister's room; Gelert as ever, at her heels. Vix was dressing before her mirror.

"I'm not quite so much 'talked about' as you choose to make out," she said casually. "Not a bit

more than you are, and nothing like so much as Lulu Fillip."

"Lulu's a bad lot altogether. She has really gone a bit too far. I suppose you're not quite like that?"

"I don't understand," said Menie haughtily.

"No, I daresay not. You're such a blesséd Innocent. But you must draw a line somewhere, in common decency. And, by the way you go on"—

"What way?" asked Menie passionately. "I am no worse than you, who have been flinging your cap at every man you meet, ever since you could walk. And in vain, *in vain*. Not one loves, nor even likes you. You're hated by men and women both. Whereas I, Menie Gamaliel, have but, as you say, to hold up my finger"—

"And you're surrounded. Yes my dear, that's just what it is. You're surrounded, but not one comes forward. Did Billy ever so much as name the name of Wife?"

"No."

"Did any one of all your admirers ever do so?"

"Dozens."

"It's a lie," quoth Vix with sisterly brevity.

"You hunt Billy, and Billy hunts me," said Menie who had regained all her coolness and sang froid, and accordingly, her powers of teazing.

Vix look hard at her in the Mirror.

"You'd better air that idea in your little world," said she, "and see how it goes down there. It comes well from you, who've become notorious. I don't

pass my nights in wayside-inns, in the company of any man who comes along. The Bishop holds his own ideas on the subject, though he says nothing. As do I. I'm not proud of my sister's reputation, I can tell you."

(With a scornful and mocking laugh, Menie swung from the room.)

Vix held in her hand a filmy cravat of lace, which she was about to fasten under the chin. Setting her teeth, with a sudden impulse of suppressed rage and thwarted passion, she ripped it in two, tore it shred from shred, and flung it into the air; her diamond pin, the last present from the bishop, she hurled through the window into the wooded ravine far below, with something like a strong and muttered curse. Vix was the mad one then. The face reflected in the mirror, one would not soon forget.

As for Menie, she sought her mother. How rarely did she do so. But Menie that night, looked somewhat pale and languid for her, as if there might be some doom upon her. Even her curly hair fell soft and limp on her forehead; there were dark rings under her eyes, and those bright eyes were dim with tears. For what? or for whom? did Menie weep? Was she crying for the moon?

The poor little mother, comforted, leaned her head on Menie's shoulder, and gave a sob, sobs were ever ready.

"Darling, darling," said Menie, "if you'll only love me and trust me, I'll never look at a man again."

"Menie, I love you, you know I love you and trust you always.

(Tableau.)

(Menie did not crave for maternal affection any more.)

Instead, she went and sought consolation from little Primrose Erskine as was her custom. Menie, as a child, had been wont to go primrose-hunting in the woods every spring; and she never sought Primrose Erskine without being reminded of those dear days, and the fresh and dew-drenched copse.

Sore at heart, feeling herself quite outside the social pale, an outcast and a pariah. Menie, laid her tired head on Primrose's.

"What makes you so good and so sweet? What makes you a good unselfish daughter? and I a bad one? Is it all heredity? I went to a high school and mixed with all sorts and conditions of girls; some were bad, and some were good. Some were refined and some were vulgar. But I was never the same Menie after that. I come out of the heat and the dust and the noise; and I'm tired and sick of it all. And you, little Primrose, you've lived on here, on the borders of the clear lake and no dust has ever soiled you. You're like the primroses I gathered when I was young. And yet—you love Menie Gamaliel. Love me, and stick to me and believe in me, whatever happens," said Menie. Then she ran out into the night.

Primrose was used to such words as these; but not to tears, and Menie's tears were wet upon her cheek.

On a sudden impulse, she flew to the door, and called her back.

Menie was already gone.

SILHOUETTE VII

IN AMBUSH—A SHOT—A HOWL—A SILENCE.

Now that Billy Buckram had Menie all to himself in the Scottish solitude, he began to have hopes of her. Trap Menie he must, somehow, whether she cared for him or not. What would the girl of the hour do, or not do? 'Twas impossible to determine or to discover. Was Menie Gamaliel fast?—or more than fast?—There had been rumours which had gone the length and breadth of S. Leonard's Forest, and far beyond, that the parson's pretty daughter had been seen on more than one occasion with some strange man, a man unknown to her people, and to the county. Nothing could be too wild for Menie. What could her father be about? Billy Buckram put the worst construction on it all. Menie in the boat, had lured him on more than ever before. Yet he didn't want to sacrifice liberty and fortune, unless driven to it.

Gun in hand, he sauntered along the beach, amid seaweed and showers, watching, always watching, for Menie. One eye was on the boat-house and the beach; the other on the road through the woods, high above, of which he caught glimpses through the

wave of the tree-tops. One solitary horseman was in sight, coming from Walcar. In those lonely parts, every figure was marked. This man happened to be silhouetted against the stormy sky. In that moment, another figure met and faced it ; it was a horse-woman, in a loose covert coat. Buckram's heart stood still. Were the tales he had heard true ? The waving trees and sheltering rocks hid them jealously from sight.

Leaning his gun against a rock, he dashed across the shingle into the wood, scrambling up the steep incline, like a madman ; in some parts the rocks opposed a sheer rampart to his grappling hands ; in others, an avalanche of stones gave out at every foot-hold ; but by dint of grip and grapple, clinging and swinging upward by roots of trees and streaming brake, he made headway for the low boundary wall of the road. He'd cut off those two, or perish. Up through the thicket, he saw their heads and shoulders, and heard their voices, as they rode slowly on at a footpace, towards Walcar, rain falling round them, unheeded.

Having gained the summit, he crouched low in the thicket, just below the stone wall, half-twined in the naked roots of a tree which sprung from the perpendicular rock, his fingers crooked within it—his soul all centred in his burning eyes—to watch them pass, the tooth of jealousy gnawing into his very vitals. His looks devoured Menie ere she came.

They rode very close together, so close that his hand was on her horse's neck, as he bent towards her. The horses, heads down, looked drenched and

resigned. The lovers—for lovers sure, they'd need be ?—drenched and content, absorbed in one another. Her collar was turned up to her ears, the peak of her cap pulled well down, so that nothing but the abrupt curl of an upper lip, and the upward tilt of a little nose, were visible, and a wet short ring of hair, which curled and clung to her cheek, just by the ear. But he—he—was gazing up under the peak of her cap. His hand touched hers. His face was turned full towards Buckram, and seemed once, to scan the wood around him. The fellow hadn't even a covert coat for his broad shoulders. He sat his horse like a soldier born, and a young and dashing one. Energy, resolution, daring, dash, spoke in the very cast of him, in the short features, and the crisp curl of the small moustache, in the bold flash of the roving eyes—and the flash of humour too—in every gesture. Face and physique were alike familiar to Buckram (and to the world) not philandering with a pretty girl, not keen and eager across net or link, but in storm-beat garrison, riddled by shot and shell, in storm-beat squadron, face to foe ?

In a picture ? or a dream ? *Then Buckram knew him* (and his own heart sank within him). Involuntarily, as the soldier spoke or pleaded, he touched his horse with the spur, his fingers closed over her gauntlet, with a grip that was significant.

MENIE HAD MET HER MASTER.

" You know I would," said Menie.

Those were the only words, clear and resonant, that came to Buckram, though he was thirsting for

more. For gaunt Gelert—ever in quest of prey—had heard and scented what his human brethren could not, a curse or groan, too low for human ear, or maybe, the shiver of a twig, perchance a hapless rabbit.

In one flying leap, he left the road, and cleared the boundary wall, and was off on the track of swaying boughs. His quarry had either fled or rolled below. His mistress was on ahead. So, with a few more playful bounds, Gelert cleared back into the road, and vanished round a turn of the rocks.

On the evening of this fateful day, there was a semblance of sunshine on those Scottish hills and glens. The sun, which loves them not, got a sudden fit of remorse on him; and, ere he sank below jagged ridge and beetling spur, sent his red banners flying to the brooding clouds, and changed them as he passed away, into glory and—Farewell. There was no sound save the tinkling of some lonely burn, a vesper prayer?

And there was that great fire in the West. A momentary Benison, for he had sunk. The motionless trees shivered through all their depths, the breeze shuddered into a wind, the wind sprang to a gale. Moans and sighs went quivering along the tremulous waste of water. All the lake grew dark. Through the wild and intermittent gusts, a shot broke from the beach, muffled by woods and distance, and instantaneously, a howl so dismal and prolonged of mortal agony, that it roused responsive echoes from the lone heart of every hill around, and died away, in anguish. Then, through the ever-

rising gale, broke another shot. And, ere the far-reverberations ceased, the risen blast drowned all.

* * * * *

On scudding clouds the storm passed away. The wind died into a breeze, which shuddered through the woods—and sank—and all was still. The trees hung lakeward in a trance. A fluttering star here and there proclaimed the unseen blue. The moon rose high, and sent her pale search-lights over the lonely waters. Nothing could be heard but the silence of the night—those voices, which silence answers—the knell and lullaby of the mountain burn, the low lament of wavelets lulling on the beach—Dirge and Requiem—

SILHOUETTE VIII

"MENIE" FLOATING ON THE LOCH.

"What's gone of Menie?"

So said Vix to her mother, as they sat down to the dinner-table, and no Menie came. Her mother didn't think anything of it. Menie was safe with Gelert, and came and went all hours of the day, and sometimes night. It was a casual family. When dinner and coffee were over, however, Vix threw a cloak over her shoulders, and announced her unwonted intention of looking her sister up.

"I expect she's up to mischief," said she; "probably on the war-path, as usual. I'll track her."

"Of course she is with the Erskines," said the mother, "and when she dines there, she generally sleeps there. Why not let her alone? I suppose she generally sleeps there at least three nights in the week."

"I don't know, I'm sceptical. I fancy she's dining with Billy Buckram. I know she went out to meet him this afternoon. I saw them together. I'm a kind of creepy to-night."

And Vix went to the cellaret, and helped herself to a very liberal lot of whiskey. She had a good head.

"A kind of what?" asked her mother.

"Creepy. I've got a chill."

" Then pray wrap up. And pray don't drink so much spirit."

" Don't nag, Mops."

(Exit Vix)

It was a wild night. As Vix strode along the drive between the darkling shrubs, her cloak streamed like a banner behind her, and the short dark locks of her bare head, went the same way. The sisters had the same small classical head, long throat and broad shoulders, but there the resemblance ceased.

Vix, lantern in hand, crossed the rustic bridge, over the ever-foaming swirling stream, went out by the gates of the tiny embowered lodge, and crossed the road to the gates of Ardmuir, where lived the mother and daughter, great chums of Menie's, though Vix voted them " deadly slow."

Little Primrose ran out to meet her.

" O, I thought you were Menie," she said naively, her face falling involuntarily.

" Then Menie's not here ?" cried Vix.

" No. She has not been here to-day."

" Well, she's not been home either. I suppose she's fooling around somewhere. I'll go and look up Billy Buckram. For she can't be on the lake now."

Primrose wrinkled her fair forehead into a little anxious frown.

" No, she can't be on the lake now. There's ever such a storm."

Before she could say more, Vix was off.

" Vix, lantern in hand, knocked at the cottage door. It was opened by Buckram ; his face was as pale as death.

"What's the matter?" he cried, before Vix could speak.

"What's gone of Menie? Have you seen her?"

"Not since three o'clock this afternoon," he answered. And Vix, in a vague way, noticed how his hand shook on the lock. "I met her walking on the Walcar road."

"You do look bad," she said. "Do you think anything's happened to her? Perhaps she's eloped. I wouldn't be a bit surprised."

"Nor I either. Vix, if she's not gone home—Here, come in, and let me speak to you."

He drew her into the small sitting-room, the only one the cottage possessed. His hands, his whole frame, were shaking.

"I believe Menie's cleared out with some fellow, I don't know who. I've good reason for thinking so. I've seen her with him several times, when she didn't see me. He's a stranger."

"Well, don't grip me quite so tight," cried Vix, in a hard high voice, "I'm not Menie. You do seem in a funk. Why didn't you tell us about it?"

"I only thought it was one of her numberless flirtations, and didn't want to get her into a scrape."

His very voice trembled as he spoke, and he sat down.

"O Vix," said he, "she's gone," and he shook as if with ague.

"And a good job too," said Vix coolly. "Well, don't let's stop gaping here like a couple of fools. Bring the lantern along. We'll go down to the boat-house."

By that time, the wind had fallen. It was a glorious still night. They hauled at the ropes hand over hand, which fastened the anchored boats; and hauled them in one by one; one boat was missing; that was significant; but then there had been a storm. Menie had probably sheltered in one of the keeper's cottages, across the loch.

Vix Gamaliel stood on the beach, and making a hollow with her hands, shouted, till hill and glen rang again.

"Menie—Menie—Menie,"

Then listened. The mocking echoes answered back, in far off gorge and ghoul-like laughter.

"Menie—Menie—Menie,"

Then they took a boat, and crossed to the keeper's cottage near. Nothing had been heard or seen of Menie. They had to give it up.

Charlotte Gamaliel, on hearing these tidings, passed from a state of passivity, into one of the greatest excitement and anxiety.

With the first glimmer of dawn, Vix and Billy Buckram were back on the loch, Vix in a high state of excitement, bordering on the sublime; Billy Buckram looking like a lost spirit, dead to hope for evermore. Thus they rowed, with long swift strokes, across the loch, and along the loch, and in and out the loch, and around the loch, in search of the missing girl, in vain, in vain.

They wired for Pete, who answered in person, before they could have thought it possible. He would have nothing to do with either Buckram or Vix. He explored the lake alone, just as the shades were about

to deepen round, for it was late. He had not a doubt in his own mind, in spite of the missing boat, that Menie had eloped. Some great eagles were hovering high above the beach. Yet, what was that drifting slowly toward him? He leaned forward, slowly backing-water with his oar, and his heart died within him, for surely he knew that small, frail boat, drifting bottom upwards, with the tide? On the stern was painted in big and distinct lettering, one word—

"*Menie.*"

SILHOUETTE IX

GELERT COMES HOME.

Summer deepened into Autumn ; and still Charlotte Gamaliel lingered on in her solitude, hoping against hope, for Menie's return. They couldn't get her away from the place ; and at last Pete, in despair, left her there. Vix also declared her intention of leaving her.

" Primrose Erskine has promised to take care of Mops," said she. " I can't stop here all my days, howling for Menie ; it won't bring her back. Life's too short. And in a month I've got to marry the Flounder, unless you all want me to chuck it, to nurse Mops ? "

They none of them wanted her so to do. They were all most anxious she should keep to her engagement. So Vix returned to the Parsonage, to see after her trousseau. Billy Buckram in his own home, attended by Aunt Blaze, was slowly recovering from an attack of brain-fever, and looked like the ghost of himself. Everybody and everything looked the same, save Billy ; for the regulation " nine days " were over. Menie Gamaliel was a thing of the past.

Gaudery, absorbed in his science, was taking a farewell view of the loin of a flea, preparatory to starting for the tennis-club with his eldest daughter. As

he leaned at right angles, she lifted the tail of his coat with her bat.

"I'm not going to play with you in a sweater. You must go away and change, if you want to go with me," said she, with her usual filial respect.

Vix was in grand form, as she shouldered her bat, and strode along beside her father. She felt ready to conquer the world. She grew quite confidential.

"I feel ever so much better since I left that dismal old hole," said she. "I expect Mops'll mope herself to death. It oughtn't to be allowed. I'll bet Menie's gone off with some Johnny or other, the one Billy saw. She'll turn up some day" (in her heart she knew she wouldn't).

Gaudery Gamaliel started from his scientific dreams into the reality of every-day life.

"Ah, poor little Menie," he said, "poor child. Pete doesn't think so."

And he pulled off his broad-brimmed hat, and wiped his forehead, for it was a warm day, and whiskey doesn't cool the blood.

"Don't you believe it," said Vix, "she's not of that sort."

After the tennis, Vix walked on to Buckram Park, to "do the benevolent," as she said; to look up Billy Buckram for the first time since his illness, and to announce her coming marriage.

On her way home with her father, her mood had changed; she was joyous and confidential no longer.

"O by the bye Dad," said she, "I've just seen the Flounder, and we're going to be spliced next week.

Mops won't come. So we're going to the Cathedral without any fuss and bridesmaids."

Meantime, poor Charlotte Gamaliel allowed herself to drift into a low hysterical state. Pete had left his mother in the special charge of Primrose Erskine; and Primrose would do anything for Menie's mother. As he gave his professional instructions, Primrose stood gazing straight at him, without a sign of coquetry, not that little Prim had not got it in her, but because she was so desperately in earnest over everything; and at that moment, it was over Mrs. Gamaliel, in whom her thoughts were centred; the straightness and innocent intensity of her gaze would have abashed Pete, could he have been abashed. Unlike his sisters, and the present race of girls in general, she was small and slender, Lulu Fillip would have made three of her; her hands and feet were like a child's; but there was a big spirit in Primrose, fragile though she looked.

"She's an old-fashioned girl," thought Pete, "no slang, no stride, no swagger; no arms akimbo; no tight-lacing there; but she's a little lady with a head on her shoulders, and a devilish pretty one too, if she had a little more colour; I should think a chronic course of Loch Lone, and the society of one old woman, has washed it all away. Poor little pale Primrose, her name suits her, she's like a primrose."

Pete Gamaliel vanished into the world like a rocket; and the women-folk were left alone. In the day-time the two were always either over at Ardmuir, or Mrs. Erskine was at Roslin. But Primrose slept at Roslin, in Menie's room, which was just opposite

Mrs.Gamaliel's. Primrose used to leave her door ajar, so that she could hear any sound in Mrs. Gamaliel's room. She had been keeping guard at Roslin three weeks. The autumal winds had set in, and rain fell without ceasing; sometimes a slight steady downpour, sometimes drizzling Scotch mist, sometimes in torrents, but always rain. The tinkling summer burns had deepened to a rush and roar, and made themselves heard through the half leafless woods. The winds screeched and moaned and sobbed and whooped and wimpered and wailed and waved in "turret and tree," according to the season; but always wind.

Primrose didn't mind; she loved it all; she was used to it. Surely this night the wind whimpered more than ever? rising into sobs and moans, as the wild trees wrestled in the moon. Moonlight filled her chamber and through the open uncurtained casement, fell full on the girl's sleeping face, her arms tossed above her head as she lay; and the waving shadows of the trees, weaved strange lights over all. The moon on her face, waked her; and something—was there not something there? Yes, full in the moonlight, standing high between her bed and the door, stood Menie's favourite hound, who never left her, great Gelert. His big dark eyes, with their sorrowful, loyal gaze dwelt full upon her; his silky shaggy coat shone silver in the moon; while his tremulous nostril seemed questing round.

Primrose was about to scream, but checked herself.

"Gelert! Gelert!" she cried, in wild joy and gladness.

Menie was alive, was near. She sprang from her bed; but Gelert had already vanished through the open door, by which he entered. Quick as light, she stole after him, on his track. He was nowhere to be seen, neither on stair nor landing, and she dare not call. She stole barefoot into Mrs. Gamaliel's room, who raised a small wan face, and looked at her.

"No, I'm not sleeping. You look like a spirit, Primrose. Is anything the matter? How pale you look."

"Nothing is the matter, dear Mrs. Gamaliel. I only looked to see if you wanted anything."

The girl shut the door gently on her; and then, with winged feet, flew back to her own room. In three minutes she was dressed, and wrapped in her plaidie. She scoured every room in the house, upstairs and down, and all the back premises, expecting to find the deer-hound lying *perdu*. One back-door was open; into the garden, by that he must have come and gone? Then Primrose flew through the wind and the rain to Ardmuir. The brief glint of moon was washed away. The East was just breaking, cold, and chill. The Dawn heralded by a wild bird call here and there. And the thunder of the rapids sounded a deep continuous fugue, to the fanfare of the intermittent wind. Withered leaves went streaming on the gale.

But Primrose's heart was hot within her; wild joy and excitement drove her on, for she knew Gelert to

be the pioneer of Menie. Breathless and panting, she rushed into her mother's room.

"For Heaven's sake, what is it?" asked Mrs. Erskine. "Not Menie?"

"O mother, mother, not Menie, but Gelert. He's come back. He just came into my room, and gave me one look. O, such a look, and was off, I couldn't catch him. I don't know where he is. But O mother, as sure as Fate, Menie isn't far away."

"My child, you must have dreamed it. You must have found him if he were there. He would have heard you call. He knows you so well."

"But supposing she is somewhere by the lake? Perhaps she has got into some scrape, and daren't come home? and sent Gelert to fetch me? I'll never rest till I find her now, or find Gelert. For, as there is a Heaven above us Mother, he stood beside my bed. And O, he was gaunt, gaunt isn't the word for him. He looked *starved*.

Mrs Erskine looked pale and abstracted.

"Yes Primrose, Menie may be somewhere, not far away; and possibly he may be keeping watch beside her, and won't leave."

She looked steadfastly at her daughter, and Primrose went white as the driven snow.

"Not that, not that mother, you mean she may be dead."

Mrs Erskine covered her face with her hands.

"That appearance of Gelert was very strange and mysterious. O, if you could have followed him," she added.

"That is what I tried for. But you know he runs

like a deer. Perhaps he has gone right away up in the hills. The only way now, will be to watch for him, and then follow."

"Yes; but not a word of this to her mother. It would kill her. I shall telegraph to Pete Gamaliel."

She did wire to Pete. And Pete wired to Gaudery, begging him to run up to Roslin, as he, Pete, was overwhelmed with business, and couldn't make head or tail of the "tel." And Gamaliel, senior, wired to Pete—

"Have given up foreign travel. Can't get away."

And Pete swore like a trooper; but finally appeared at Roslin, not in the best of tempers. Whiskey and dinner however, restored and revived him. Pete Gamaliel could never be out of temper very long, particularly with a pretty girl, whose eyes too were as soft and velvety as the full petals of a flower, as blue as the "mouse-ear" in the sedge. He dined with his mother at Roslin, and then went over to Ardmuir to hear the tale. He was at first inclined to be scoffing and sceptical, and jeered at the whole thing; but, in spite of himself, the tale impressed him, and he grew grave and distrait.

With Pete Gamaliel, action followed close on the heels of thought. With a couple of the most experienced guides in the neighbourhood, who knew every rood of the country for leagues around, he set out at daybreak, and was away for three days. Valley, hill, and forest were searched in vain. No trace of Gelert, neither of Menie, was to be found. Pete returned, sceptical once more.

"No, Mrs Erskine," said he. "It's all a myth.

There is no deer-hound to be seen, nor even heard of. There's not a clue. Either Menie lies at the bottom of the fathomless lake ; or there has been foul play. I am inclined to think the latter. But I have no proof, positively none ; and can only keep my eyes open, and watch and wait."

" You suspect someone," said Mrs Erskine calmly, with a searching look.

Pete's expression was stern and significant ; but he stared out of the window, drawing down one corner of his mouth, and answered nothing.

" I'll watch and wait," he said at last, " there's nothing more to do. I warned them how it would be," he added bitterly ; " but only got kicks for my pains. Ah, Mrs Erskine, if Menie had been brought up like your daughter, she'd be alive and well now ; for, if she's not dead, maybe she's something worse. You do well to keep your daughter by you. I recall the time when Menie could have been led by a thread of silk. She has just been flung to perdition."

And Pete strode stormily away.

Mrs Erskine had never known Pete in that mood before ; she had never seen any but the comic and humourous side of him, and hadn't thought it possible he could ever be in earnest. Depths had been revealed. He took a farewell walk with Primrose.

" We must get my mother out of this," he said, or she'll slip out another way. I am coming up in a month's time to fetch her, and take her back to Sandilands. But she has grown so devoted to you, Primrose, you must come too ?"

Primrose blushed and smiled most charmingly.

"I can't leave mother, unless she will go to Edinburgh."

"O, we will arrange all that. But tell me," he said abruptly, "are you given to see ghosts? Have you got strong nerves?"

"I am not given to see ghosts, Mr Gamaliel; and I have got strong nerves."

They were walking through a dark and winding path in the Ardmuir woods; and Pete Gamaliel, stopping within it, laid his fingers lightly on Primrose's pulse. She laughed, and then was silent. He looked at his watch, with a grave professional air.

No, you're sound as a bell. Now, the tongue."

"O I can't and I won't," laughed Primrose. "I am alright, I have never been ill for a day, or even an hour."

I believe you. And the eyes Primrose? Look up, please."

Primrose turned up her eyes, with a demure and saintly expression, and then met Pete's dominant gaze, unabashed. She stared at his droll lugubrious countenance, till her own began to flash and quiver; there was a "naughty little twinkle in her eye."

"Will you say 'can't' and 'won't' to a husband?" asked Pete. "I begin to think you're a very resolute character, Primrose, small as you are."

"I am," said Primrose, "I am not easily frightened even by a man, or a ghost."

"Ah, that ghost. He has led me two wild goose chases already. Will he ever lead me another?" and he looked at her hard.

"O, you needn't have anything more to do with him, Mr. Pete, unless you wish."

But I want to have more to do with you, Primrose. I worship the whole tribe of Primulacæe; but more especially the Primrose type; one of which, par excellence, I covet more than all."

Primrose gave him a sidelong glance out of her blue eyes, and then averted her face.

"Ah, if you could have seen Gelert as I did."

"I would give anything to have been one of the actors in the scene," said Pete. "But, I can picture it all. And yet, who ever saw or heard of the ghost of a dog? Tell me child, weren't you half asleep?"

"*No* Sir; positively, I was wide awake, and the room was as light as day. Nothing would ever make me believe," cried Primrose vehemently, "that it wasn't Gelert in flesh and blood, a living, breathing hound."

Half unconsciously, they bent their steps from the woods down to the beach, and neared the Roslin boat-house. Primrose had never been that way since then. Her eyes were keen and very far-seeing; and they dilated then, with a strange expression. Up in the shadows, in the slope of the wood, the great stag-hound stood at gaze, just as she had seen him beside her bed.

"Gelert! Gelert"! she cried, wildly stretching forth her hands; with great bounds, he disappeared up into the wood, beyond the boat-house; Primrose, caught up her skirt, and *ran*.

She ran wellnigh as fleetly as the hound; but, he

was lost, vanished from her ken. As for Pete, he had never even caught a glimpse of him, nor seen him standing there. He took a dog whistle from his pocket however, and blew whistles on it shrill and prolonged. They explored the wood in every direction. They called and shouted till they were hoarse.

Loch, glen and forest rang with the cry of " Gelert, Gelert." *No Gelert came.*

* * * * *

Long years after this episode, Pete Gamaliel, who was never long serious or sad, made a little Bathos song, and had it set to music, and gave it to Primrose (his wife.) Primrose had a charming voice. Primrose used to sing :

(Song.)

Menie's gone beyond recall,
Menie's near
Yet Menie's far.
Menie's just a darkling star.
What's gone of Menie ?

Menie had a dainty phiz,
Naughty lips,
And naughty eyes.
Where'er she biked
The Johnnies riz.
What's gone of Menie ?

Menie's sky high
On her Bike.
Scalpless Martyrs
Join the throng—
To whom will Menie
Then belong,
Which be mate of Menie ?

Menie ? Menie's in the moon,
Menie's far
Yet Menie's near.
Menie is a little spoon,
So what could come to Menie ?

Menie ? Menie's in the Lake.
Menie sleeps
Yet Menie wakes.
I'd have died for her sweet sake.
What's gone of Menie ?

Menie ? Menie's in the cloud,
That gathers silver
In the storm.
Menie's in her little shroud.
What's gone of Menie ?

Just a little body bad,
Gone to chill
And gone to waste,
Menie's spirit
" On the gad."
Tells no tales of Menie.

Menie, mount ye
Broom or Bike
Up in yonder starry waste?
Are ye "form divine"
Or, wings?
Whisper once—Menie?

Menie's spirit, ever "there,"
Never speaks
Yet never dies.
Tell, ye Johnnies in the skies
What's gone of Menie?

SILHOUETTE X

"IN THE BOSOM."

Five—ten years have run away. And still Bathos links Pathos, youth links age, life links death, and ever will. Time corrodes each link. They fall asunder. And there's an end.

Motto for the Nineteenth Century—and there's an end. We look out on a blank wall and night. We put our philosophical hands in our pockets and whistle. We fall asleep.

Yet there are such things as dreams. Sometimes we wake suddenly, through some flash of light, which gleams and goes. There is the blank wall and night. We sleep. We dream no more. This sleep will not last long. Then comes the "sleep" that knows no waking.

Thus "we ripe," "we rot," "we end."

The silver of the leaflet, crinkled by restraint, fresh-fluttering from its sheath, smooths out into the broad leaf, which shelters from sun and storm.

The broad leaf, which was at once our shade and shelter, curls up, wrinkles, withers, and falls supine to earth to rot.

The red and wrinkled face of the babe tones down, smooths out, lights up. But only to wrinkle up again, to fade, to dim, to fall to dust. The hand

that shielded, falls. The heart that sheltered, fails. And there's an end.

Poor little Charlotte Gamaliel had been gathered to her Norman Crusaders, while waiting for the Menie who never came. She died, and was buried at Roslin. Her disappearance made no more stir than if a little pebble had been dropped into the lake. The great waters of oblivion closed over her small cares and yearning sorrows, and the world knew her no more.

Pete and Primrose had long been caught and bound in the fetters of "holy matrimony." Lulu Fillip had long sought consolation elsewhere. Gamaliel Gaudery slowly but surely wrinkled over the whiskey and the cells; and, hands in pockets, philosophically looked across the tomb of his wife, into the night. He was a philosopher. He didn't miss the dormice. His grandchildren filled the void; but even they, failed to create much interest in him, save as being chips of Gaudery.

Vix had long weaved her web round the big bluebottle in the Palace. He had long ceased to struggle and wheeze; the struggle at best, had been of the feeblest. Vix reigned supreme. The "quiver" was not full of little flounders. Nor did a single one spread as an olive-branch "round about the table." Poor Flounder had to be "ashamed" when he "met his enemies in the gate;" but those were few.

Susannah, the Bishop's wife, was not beloved; nor, on any occasion or consideration, could she have been styled "most precious," even by an infatuated

husband. "Most precious" was dedicated to the memory of No. I.

In these days the whole world went by steam. Horseless carriages began to run about. Where one "wheel" ran in Menie's days, thousands were spinning then. Statesmen, judges, bishops, princes, rotund dowagers, and withered maids in boyish gear, bestrode their saddles gallantly, and streamed along in one wild whirl. And still the cry, they come! Skirts assumed the proportions of half-opened umbrellas, before the final inflation. Sleeves bulged gigantic.

In one of her rare intervals of quiescence, Vix soliloquized in her palatial casement, gazing over pastoral and episcopal seclusion of walled in garden and cloister.

"I wonder if Billy did have any hand in it? I always suspected something. I'm not sure, if I'd gone into Court, I couldn't have hanged him. Somebody did it. And, if ever a man looked guilty, Billy did. I've always hated him since. He gives me the shudders. He always looks so evil, like a ghost, he's never been the same man since. Why did I ever go and look, when I heard the shot that day?" (She shuddered.) "What did he do with her? I never confessed. Menie carried her deringher that day. I saw it in her belt. Why didn't she use it in defence? Why didn't she save herself and shoot him? Anyway, she didn't. She came to grief. O yes, she came to grief. I wonder will it ever come out? Pete suspects Billy, I know. Menie—poor Menie"—

Vix's eyes, with time and wear and tear, had grown harder and brighter than ever, and there were incipient crowsfeet round them; but with the last words, those eyes softened involuntarily. We can forgive the dead so much. The mist-wreath of time and memory falls lightly over them. Imperceptibly, by slow and gradual process, sins change into errors, errors into virtues. The sinner becomes transformed into a saint. Even the physique of the lost one changes. Time changes and hallows all.

Vix could forgive Menie all, because she was lying under her daisy-coverlet, and was seen no more. When Vix talked of her lost sister to strangers, it was always

"My beautiful sister Melpomene. O yes, it is a romantic name; but it suited her, she was so tall and graceful. Menie was persecuted by lovers. I never knew any girl so run after as she was; but she wouldn't look at any of them. Eloped? O dear no; we should have heard from her long ago, if she had. There is no doubt that she was drowned in the loch."

Vix, as she leaned within her casement, no longer saw the Palace gardens, nor the stately walls of the Cathedral. She was gazing on the green slopes of the little garden far away. The high laurel hedges were glistening with the dew, and shadowed by sycamores; and through the hedge, broke Menie. Menie, in her blue serge and Tam-o-Shanter, with her big hound in leash. Some 'special life-pictures get stamped on memory, we know not how or why. It is just that. Nothing happened before or after to mark this special scene. Vix always saw Menie and

Gelert breaking from out the laurel hedge, and the sunshine on her fair curls and blue Tam-o-Shanter. O yes, there could be no doubt Menie had been beautiful. A tenderness and remorse Vix had never felt before for living thing, half dimmed the bold bright eyes, and she hummed a line of Pete's song :—

" Menie's gone beyond recall,
Menie's near
Yet Menie's far ;
Menie's just a darkling star.
What's gone of Menie ?

Menie ? Menie's in the lake,
Menie wakes
Yet Menie sleeps ;
I'd have died for her sweet sake.
What's gone of Menie ?"—

And so Vix, in that moment, thought she could. Menie had grown into a memory, Menie had grown near and dear, because Menie was dead.

"O, what an infernal bore," soliloquized Vix, " is this family-gathering at Roslin. What in the world does Pete want us for ? He generally packs Primrose and the brats off there alone. Well, I suppose it's got to come. We've declined every year till now. Flounder seems quite determined this time, and hurls duty at me in ponderous clods, and my mother's mausoleum on the top of 'em. I must go, and have done with it. I *loathe* the place. I've never been there since—and Billy's taken that cottage this year for the fishing too. Whatever could have induced

him ? I suppose, to clear up suspicion. And the old Dad is to be hauled out of his seclusion. O, we shall be a happy family "! The following day, at Pete's instigation, they were all assembled at Roslin.

" We must keep up family ties you know, and all that sort of thing, " said Pete to Gaudery. " They're apt to get loose, if not tightened up once in a while. I'm sure your pals can spare you for a couple of days."

" Hang my pals," said Gaudery, and flung his things into a portmanteau, and jumped on it.

" Heaven help you for that same word, " laughed Pete. " Prim means business this time ; and the fourth hope of the family has got to be baptized. "

" Why, you've only been married four years and nine months," growled Gaudery. " You've run it precious fine, I must say."

" It's a little way we Gamaliels have, " said Pete.

" I seem to hear of a brat of yours christened every month."

Pete laughed, as he whisked him off to the station.

" I can't support Flounder without your muscular assistance. We've landed him high and dry ; but, he's flopping heavily, and Vix squirming. "

" The Lord help us," said Gaudery, at thoughts of his son-in-law.

Once round the table, however, well-primed with whiskey, they made quite a jovial party; and Gaudery kept them all in roars of laughter. He was in grand form, and so was Pete.

Primrose made a charming hostess. And, though the Gamaliels could be coarse on occasion, she wisely

closed her eyes and ears, like the thorough little lady she was, making all due allowance for whiskey and champagne. Three babies were planted round the table for dessert. The fun waxed fast and furious. The Bishop, looking benevolently round on all, rose to propose a toast, "The family."

"On this most delightful and auspicious occasion, I cannot do better, Ha, hum."

"Take your time, old man," cried Pete, "this ain't no bloomin' Cathedral. Cheer up. Fire away."

"Now Pete, Pete."

(The Bishop solemnly raised his hand.)

"Order, order, I cannot do better than propose, the health of the—babies—five babies."

"Six," prompted Pete.

"The—six babies"; he looked solemnly round at the three, and nodded benevolently to the six.

(Cheers and laughter.)

"It is delightful to propose in the bosom of the Family—I repose."

"Buck up, old man!" cried Pete.

(Renewed laughter.)

"I repose in the bosom of the Family," cried Pete getting on his feet. "I propose the bosom of the Family! I repose in the bosom of my family, with a eeling of satisfaction and repose!"

Pete, glass in hand, began to dance a hornpipe.

Primrose fled with the youngest baby. Cheers and laughter followed her.

SILHOUETTE XI

BETWEEN THE SUNSET AND THE MOON— SOME BONES.

The next, was a glorious afternoon, glorious for puir auld Reekie. It rained at intervals, and the sun dried the fishermen between the showers. The Gamaliels, father and son, went a-fishing. Pete went out all day and every day when at Roslin, which was seldom, there was nothing else to do. They fished for lithe, and bass, and cod, and seth, anything that came to hand.

Vix went out with a boy, on her own account. Primrose and her mother were to look after the Bishop and the babies, and were to meet the fishers on the beach, on their return at night.

"And you may as well bring that wretched fellow Buckram along, if he's back," sung out Pete, as he pushed off. "He's all alone. Ask him to dinner." An unwonted piece of benevolence on Pete's part, for he didn't love him.

It was a heavenly night. The rain just ceased, to let the sun set, and the moon rise. Bishop Flounder, and the dejected Buckram, ghost of his former self, who had accepted the unwonted invitation to Roslin. walked on ahead, down the path through the woods,

Primrose lingered, and followed with her mother, for she had had a good deal of Bishop during the day, and couldn't abide the sight of Buckram.

"How could Pete ask him?" she said. I suppose because he is a "pal," as Pete calls it, of his father's."

"Unhappy man," said tender hearted Mrs Erskine, "he looks miserable enough! I never can help pitying him. Whether he had anything to do with her disappearance, or whether he has simply never forgotten her, he has been punished severely. A punishment that, I think, will last his life. He looks like an old man."

"I am very hard," said Primrose.

It was the hour between the sunset and the moon. The glory and the gloom of the after-glow was over all. That glory, so radiant—yet so sombre—which speaks of spent fires, and the days that are dead. A cortège of plume-like clouds caught the glitter on their wings, and swept the sky like a vast flight of angels, and the west wind was soft and wild. As the radiance faded—faded—a great golden gloom, slowly spreading and brightening behind the hills, darkened forest and glen, and told that the full moon was on her way. The spent fires of smouldering sunset mingled with the splendour of the quickening moon. And, all was still—

The influence of the glorions scene and solitude told upon both Primrose and her mother. They were both silent and sad. As they went down on to the beach, through crunching pebbles and long strips of seaweed, redolent from the great wild seas, they let

the men go on ahead; for voices and oars were already heard across the Loch, far away. They sat down within the boathouse; as they did so, the moon rose above the lone hills, like a golden world, hung in space; and flowed, in silver radiance, across the rippling waves.

"Mother, it's ten years ago since I saw Gelert. I wonder, will I ever see him again?"

"My Darling," said the mother tenderly, "you will never see him again. Your nerves were overwrought. It must have been, as Pete says, just a chimera of the brain."

Primrose shook her head.

"I have never been given to nerves, mother, as you know. I saw Gelert, as plainly as I see you now. I'll never believe but that Menie was then alive, and perhaps in extremis of mind or body, in some lonely wood or glen. Had she been drowned, Gelert would have been drowned with her, for she always took him in the boat. No, mother, he did his best to take me to her, but I failed her, and—she is *dead*."

She covered her eyes with her hand; the other was taken by her mother, in silent sympathy.

"Why do I talk?" said Primrose at last, looking across the lake with tearless eyes. "I never forget Menie. I never forgive myself. But, as you know mother, I haven't mentioned her name for many and many a long day. Why do I think of her now?"

She started, and looked round, a sound was heard close to them, like the snapping of a dry twig, as if trodden on by some little wild animal, or stray bird.

"It's just up there Gelert went, just at the back of the boat-house, but Pete and I hunted all through the wood, up and down. There they come, I hear Pete's laugh, and Bounce is with him."

They were all standing grouped on the beach.

"Rare sport!" cried Gaudery Gamaliel, who had thoroughly enjoyed his day. "Boat-load of fish for you, Prim."

The boat looked laden with silver, in the light of the moon. Vix also, shot up with a goodly cargo, picturesque enough, with her jetty eyes and curls, and scarlet jacket and fez. The boy was sent up to the house with the baskets; and, when all was made taut, Pete struck up for a short cut through the woods, at the back of the boat-house; the others followed, all but the Bishop and Mrs. Erskine, who went home by the path.

"It's an awful steep climb," said Vix, "but come on Prim. We've done it many a time."

A bevy of terriers rushed on ahead, sending the rabbits scurrying in all directions, but automatically obedient to Pete's whistle of recall. They knew him well. They all started however wildly scratching at a heap of dead leaves and sea-weed and debris, which had been drifted by the winds and waves, just on the border of the wood, a lonely cleft, between forest and beach, and the moon shone full upon it. Pete stopped to urge them on.

"They think they've got something there."

"A rabbit for a monkey," said Vix.

"But Pete's quick eye caught the gleam of something white.

" By George no they haven't. Come here Bounce. Back sir."

He beckoned quickly to his father, and partially drew something from the leaves above it. It was the skeleton of a gigantic dog, Gelert's fore-arm had been the same size as the fore-leg of a thorough-bred horse. It was the skeleton of Gelert.

Primula gave a little cry, and threw herself on her knees. Buckram was white as death, and the sweat stood upon his forehead. Involuntarily, Pete glanced towards him. Still the dogs were at work, wild with excitement, and kept to it by Pete.

" Quiet, quiet, let e'm alone. Let e'm work. What do you suspect, Pete ?" asked Gaudery in a low voice.

" I more than suspect," answered Pete, in the same tone. " I don't want the skeleton of the dog moved. I think, Sir, the mystery lies here."

His tone was stern and compressed. Buckram, leaning against a tree apart, looked ready to swoon away. Primrose and Vix stood watching, mute and still.

Suddenly Pete called off the dogs from their search ; he dropped on his knees, and held up his hand to his father. Old Gamaliel bent trembling above him, his eyes starting. Primrose gave a suppressed cry. Pete glanced at her once. There was no doubt of it, the bleached bones of what had once been—Menie. A shred of blue serge told the tale, and Menie—Pete was mindful in a flash—had been very tall. Gelert lay dead at her feet—

The very trees seemed to tremble round the

appalled and silent group below. The dark rocks, like sentinels, to stand out mute witnesses to the dastard deed. The moon poured her melancholy light over all. The low winds sounded a Coronach above. The low waves lapped the beach below.

All nature seemed to thrill, in one unavailing sigh, for the dead girl's fate.

" Menie—Menie "—

SILHOUETTE XII

"GUILTY."

The two Gamaliels held a long consultation, that dismal and never to be forgotten night. They sat up till dawn. After which, there was no longer doubt in the mind of Gaudery Gamaliel, that Buckram had been his daughter's murderer. The bones of poor Menie were to be interred on the following morning, beside her mother. After which, Gaudery and his daughter Vix, meant to fly from Roslin. Pete declared his intention of selling the place, which was his, Primrose said she could never live there again.

The morning dawned dark and dank, wild and wet. The two men in their mackintoshes, were dismally pacing the garden. Father and son more than ever alike, and more than ever like two sick monkeys, each with a drawn-down corner of the mouth. Primrose came running to them.

"Pete, what shall we do? Who do you think has turned up at Ardmuir just at this terrible time? A Miss Dalbiac, who says she is the sister of dear Menie's lover, a Captain Dalbiac, a man with whom, she says, she was about to elope, when"—

Primrose's voice broke, and she turned away. Gaudery stared at Pete and Pete at Gaudery.

"That must be the stranger-fellow she was seen about with," said Pete.

"Let us see her by all means," said Gaudery. "She may throw some light on Menie's fate. Who knows but that this fellow may not have been her murderer after all? or may not solve the mystery. Where is he?" he asked of Primrose.

"He is in Canada. But Miss Dalbiac says he is coming home, and is anxious to see you."

"Pete, shall we go over to Ardmuir before the funeral?"

"By all means. There's no time to be lost."

And the two men strode away at a killing pace. Primrose, her boy in hand, stood looking after them. Ardmuir was right on the border of the loch, and the drawing-room windows stood open to the water, and a grand view of the heathered hills beyond, which were veiled in clouds. The little room was very dark and rain beat in at the open windows; which however, the only occupant of the room didn't seem at all to mind. She rose and threw down her work, as the two men were ushered in. They bowed. She held out her hand.

"Surely," she said, "we may shake hands. We are companions in sorrow. You are the father and brother of dear Menie. I am the sister of the man who broke his heart over her loss, and has never forgotten her."

Miss Dalbiac was a tall, fine-looking woman, somewhat inclining to *embonpoint*, for, young though she was, there was a suspicion of a double chin already; and her complexion, which must have been her

great beauty, had somewhat faded, perhaps under a tropical sun ; so much they could make out. Her voice was quite peculiar, highly sympathetic, and struck home to the hearts of both her hearers. Her manner carried conviction of sincerity. Dalbiac could have no hand in this crime. This wasn't the sister of a murderer. Besides, having seen Buckram in that fatal scene, Gaudery's suspicions had been aroused, and now amounted wellnigh to certainty.

The two men and Miss Dalbiac shook hands warmly.

"And now," said Gaudery, "tell me all you know about my poor unhappy child? You know what we have just discovered. Can you throw any light on the matter?"

"None, absolutely none. My brother has always been possessed by the idea that she was drowned in the lake. He never entertained the smallest doubt of it. Now it is all a mystery. She must have been murdered."

She sat down by the open window.

"But I will tell you all I know. My brother, Captain Dalbiac, met Menie Gamaliel, first riding along the road on her bicycle, when he was returning home from hunting ; it was a case of love at first glance. He was very susceptible and impulsive. He followed her ; and, there and then, they struck up an acquaintance. Yes, it was all very lawless and improper I know, I am not going to excuse either of them ; but, in these lax days, when girls run about all over the country alone and unprotected, perhaps he was not so much to blame after all.

After that, they met constantly, always by tryst. I knew nothing about it till some time after. Then Harry told me he wished to go straight to you, and ask your consent to their marriage. But Menie said it would be quite useless to do so, as you were determined never to let a daughter of yours marry a poor man ; and Harry was little better than penniless, and was deeply in debt beside. He was in a Cavalry regiment ; he had his pay, and nothing more, and his fame. He had distinguished himself at Candahar and in the Afghan War, and had got promotion in consequence."

"What!" cried Pete, "is he 'fighting Dalbiac,' the hero of Candahar?"

She flashed her eyes at him through the dusk.

"Yes," she answered proudly, "he is 'fighting Dalbiac,' my brother. However, that brother of mine determined to throw up his profession, his ambition, all else, for Menie Gamaliel. They arranged between them, that he should sell his commission, and that they should go off together to seek a fortune in the Brazils. Poor dears, it was a wild scheme enough."

"And a cruel one," said Gaudery. "Menie killed her mother."

Miss Dalbiac was silent for a moment.

"Had Menie lived," said she, "to carry out her intention, she would never have left her mother in suspense. Indeed, I learned from my brother, that she had written a farewell note to her mother, which was to be delivered into Mrs Gamaliel's own hand, the very evening Menie disappeared. I cannot

imagine how it was that Mrs. Gamaliel never received it. Menie also was to have written immediately on her landing at Rio, and twice after that; but her letters were never answered. Everything had been planned out. That fatal day, Harry was awaiting her at Walcar, and Menie was to start at five o'clock in the afternoon, in her boat, and meet him half way across the lake. He started at the appointed hour, but she never came. He found nothing but her boat drifting with the tide. There had been a squall, and, expert sailor though she was, he imagined it must have caught and capsized her bit of a boat. Harry remained for weeks in the neighbourhood, searching for some trace of Menie Gamaliel. He never doubted but that she was drowned. But now, what can we think? Harry is even now in England, and will come straight here. He will not rest till she is avenged."

She turned impetuously to the two men.

"She was murdered, and the boat must have been turned adrift as a blind."

"Not a doubt of it," said Gaudery sternly.

And we've got to find the man," said Pete. "*He's not far away.*"

Miss Dalbiac looked hard at him. She said nothing. Then, starting to her feet impulsively, and ruffling the fair hair above her brow with her hands, she cried—

"But why should I keep you longer in the dark, when I can tell you all? That man, that cruel man," and she pointed to Pete, "he can tell you too. Billy

Buckram had a desperate quarrel with Menie on the beach by Loch Lone, and Gelert flew at him. He shot her faithful Gelert. Then, mad with rage, she shot at Buckram and missed. I know Menie's fate. Menie was neither drowned, nor murdered. Pete brought the bones! I'm Henry Dalbiac's wife. I'm *Menie*.

* * * * *

CURTAIN FALLS.

Alastor Graeme.

Marryat

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